

**BEFORE THE
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
OF THE
STATE OF INDIANA**

IN THE MATTER OF:

**RULE AMENDMENTS RELATING TO
SPORT AND COMMERCIAL FISHING
FOR CATFISH**

) **Administrative Cause**
) **Number 10-112D**
) **(LSA Document # 10-657(F))**

**REPORT ON RULE PROCESSING, CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS,
ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION
REGARDING FINAL ADOPTION**

1. RULE PROCESSING

For consideration are proposed amendments to 312 IAC 9-7-3, 312 IAC 9-7-16, 312 IAC 9-8-2 and 312 IAC 9-8-6. These proposed rule amendments would alter the bag and size limit associated with both sport and commercial fishing for catfish.

Individuals involved in sport fishing would be prohibited from taking any blue, channel or flathead catfish that is under 15 inches in length and will be limited to taking only one blue and one flathead catfish 35 inches in length or longer and one channel catfish 28 inches in length or longer per day from streams or rivers except the Ohio River and its bays and tributaries. Sport anglers on the Ohio River, including its bays and tributaries, will be permitted to take an unlimited number of blue and flathead catfish under 35 inches or channel catfish under 28 inches in length but will be limited to taking only one blue and one flathead catfish 35 inches in length or longer and one channel catfish 28 inches in length or longer per day.

An individual fishing under a commercial fishing license would be prohibited from taking any blue, channel or flathead catfish that is under 15 inches in length and will be limited to taking only one blue and one flathead catfish 35 inches in length or longer and one channel catfish 28 inches in length or longer per day from waters of the state, boundary waters or waters containing state-owned fish other than the Ohio River and its bays and tributaries. On the Ohio River, including its bays and tributaries, the holder of a commercial fishing license will be permitted to take an unlimited number of blue and flathead catfish under 35 inches or channel catfish under 28 inches in length but will be limited to taking only one blue and one flathead catfish 35 inches in length or longer and one channel catfish 28 inches in length or longer per day.

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) granted preliminary adoption of this rule amendment proposal on July 20, 2010.

The "Notice of Intent" to adopt the proposed rule amendment was posted to the INDIANA REGISTER database website as 20101013-IR-312100657NIA on October 13, 2010. The notice identified Linnea Petercheff, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, as the "small business regulatory coordinator" for purposes of Indiana Code § 4-22-2-28.1.

As specified by Executive Order, proposed fiscal analyses of the rule proposal were submitted, along with a copy of the proposed rule language and a copy of the posted Notice of Intent, to the Office of Management and Budget on October 14, 2010. In a letter dated November 18, 2010, Adam. M. Horst, Director, Office of Management and Budget, recommended that the proposed rule amendments be approved.

The NRC Division of Hearings submitted the rule proposal to the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) along with the "Statement Concerning Rules Affecting Small Business" (also known as the "Economic Impact Statement") on January 18, 2011. The Notice of Public Hearing was submitted to LSA on January 19, 2011. The Notice of Public Hearing, along with the Economic Impact Statement and the text of the proposed rule was posted to the INDIANA REGISTER database website on February 2, 2011 as 20110202-IR-312100657PHA. Following receipt of an "Authorization to Proceed" from LSA on January 19, 2011, the NRC Division of Hearings also caused a Notice of Public Hearing to be published by the Indianapolis Newspapers, a newspaper of general circulation in Marion County Indiana, on February 2, 2011. In addition, the notice of the public hearing and a summary of the proposed rule changes were published on the Commission's web-based electronic calendar.

As required by Ind. Code § 4-22-2.1-5, a copy of the rule proposal and Economic Impact Statement was forwarded to the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (the "IEDC") for review and comment on January 19, 2011. In a letter dated and received on February 21, 2011, Ryan Asberry, Assistant Vice President of IEDC stated, "the IEDC does not object to the economic impact to small businesses associated with the proposed rule." The IEDC's comments were posted to the Commission's Website on February 28, 2011 at <http://www.in.gov/nrc/2348.htm>, and were available for review at the public hearings as required by Ind. Code § 4-22-2.1-6.

2. REPORT OF PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMENTS

a) Public Hearing Comments

Public hearings were scheduled and conducted on March 21, 2011 at the Shircliff Theatre on the Vincennes University Campus and on March 22, 2011 at the Indiana Government Center North. Sandra Jensen served as the hearing officer and various representatives were present on behalf of the Department of Natural Resources' Divisions of Fish and Wildlife and Law Enforcement.

Approximately 128 individuals attended the two public hearings, combined. A summary of the comments received have been attached as Exhibit A, which is incorporated by reference.

b) Comments Received Outside Public Hearing

Written public comments were received from approximately July 20, 2010 until March 25, 2011.¹ These written comments are attached to this report as Exhibit B and are incorporated by reference.

c) Response by the Department of Natural Resources

The Department of Natural Resources (*Department*) responded to the public comments on June 9, 2011. A copy of the Department's response is attached as Exhibit C, and is incorporated by reference.

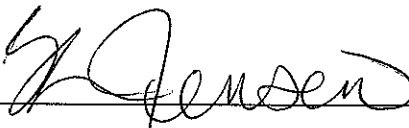
3. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

The present rule amendment proposal emerged from the Commission's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Rules Enhancement Project following receipt of substantive suggestions that protections be implemented with respect to Indiana's catfish. In its response the Department identifies several factors that resulted in its initial concurrence with the Commission's directive.

However, upon consideration of the comments received from the public, which is split between opposition and support, the Department has concluded that "the proposed catfish rules are premature" noting that "additional effort is warranted to more specifically identify catfish protection needs around the state." The Department has therefore requested that the Commission not grant final adoption of the rule proposal set forth at Exhibit D, which is incorporated by reference.

The Department's response is supported by the extensive public comment received and the hearing officer concurs with the Department's assessment and recommends that this proposed rule amendment be withdrawn.

Dated: June 15, 2011


Sandra L. Jensen
Hearing Officer

¹ Please note that updated software associated with the electronic submission of comments was implemented while the comment period was open for this rule. Consequently, there are two different styles associated with the written comments that were received electronically.

EXHIBIT A

MARCH 21, 2011

Coty Seals from Vincennes, Knox County, Indiana stated that if the size limit is increased to 15" the rivers will be "abundantly loaded with fiddlers." He cited turtle creek reservoir as an example and added that the abundance of little fish will "smother out" the bigger fish stating that "you can't catch a bass" there right now. He stated his opinion that the limit on the small side needed to be left at 10" but the limit on the larger catfish was "fine" but should not apply to the commercial fishermen who are working to make a living. "If they're out there just playing around for a trophy, one's enough" Seals said.

Chester Seals, from Vincennes, Knox County, Indiana stated that the rule should be left like it is.

Mike Tislow, from Hazelton, Indiana stated that the rule should be left like it is adding that efforts needed to be made to eliminate the other fish that are killing the catfish.

John Brewer, from Vincennes, Indiana questioned who was going to regulate the Illinois side of the river.

Andrea Brewer, from Vincennes, Indiana stated that in order to protect the catfish something needs to be done about the Asian Carp. She added that the Asian Carp is the problem to catfish as well as being a danger to boaters.

Paul Willett, from Henderson, Kentucky advised that he is a guide on the Ohio River. He stated support for the amendment adding that he is "tired of seeing trophy fish go out of state to line other state's pockets with revenue." He advised that there are approximately 40 pay lakes in southern Ohio and a lot of the trophy fish are going there.

Donna Terrell* from Vincennes, Knox County, Indiana stated that she has been fishing the Ohio River since she was a little girl and requested that the rule be left the way it is.

Demetrius Kennis*, from Kentucky stated that the rule "definitely needs passed." There are a lot of guys who trophy fish for flatheads and blues and commercial fishermen have "raped the Ohio River, White River and Wabash River long enough." He noted that most of the big catfish are being sold in Ohio for pay lakes.

???? Zeigler*, from Evansville, Indiana stated that he fishes the Ohio River mainly and is on both sides of this issue. He stated that his dad was a commercial fisherman and he has friends who continue to fish commercially so he understands that it is revenue for them. He noted that there is an influx of fish farmers now and USDA regulations that require grocery stores to purchase fish from those farmers. He stated that most people do not want to eat a fish out of the

* The names and/or name spelling associated with these comments is uncertain. The individuals failed to sign in as instructed thereby preventing the hearing officer from confirming the name and/or spelling.

Ohio River that is over 20 pounds. He stated that the fish under 20 pounds are the better fish and the commercial fishermen he knows do not have a market for fish bigger than that and further explained that their primary source of income is Spoonbill. In conclusion, he offered support for the amendment based upon his knowledge that the Ohio River cannot sustain the loss of the number of 80-100 pound catfish that he's observed going to pay lakes in Ohio.

Andy Patterson*, from Putnam County, Indiana stated that he hates to see anyone's livelihood disturbed but stated support for the rule that has been proposed. He stated his belief that greater numbers of larger catfish in the river will aid in controlling the Asian Carp. Patterson expressed full support for the proposal as it relates to limits on the larger catfish but expressed doubt for the need to increase the size limit for the smaller catfish. He noted that there is only a 14 inch minimum on walleye, which is a non-reproducing fish, stocked in Indiana, and expressed that a 15 inch minimum on a reproducing fish didn't really make sense.

Winston Bush, from Sheridan, Indiana, noted that this proposal is for the management of a natural resource. He stated that until now there has been no management of catfish as a natural resource and expressed the opinion that the amendment needs to pass because there's "been no management of this resource for too long." He expressed that the proposal is not about taking livelihood away but observed that possibly the proposal will serve to sustain that livelihood in the long-term. There really is no market for big catfish except to be sold to pay lakes. He stated that he has observed them be hauled away from the Ohio River by "hundreds and hundreds of pounds." "They need management...they need protection and the sooner this passes the better", Bush stated.

Larry Haycraft, from Petersburg, Indiana explained that he is a 4th generation net maker who wants to pass the craft along to the next generation. He stated that he's caught a lot of big fish noting that he gives away most of the fish he catches to those who need food. He stated that during the great depression there were houseboats on the Ohio and the Wabash observing that during hard economic times people turn to the natural resources to feed themselves. He expressed understanding that everyone likes to catch a big fish sometimes and observed that most commercial fishermen make a "pretty good living at it." The Asian Carp is the problem can be caught all day long and they just kill them.

Michael Harrell, Sr., from Ragsdale, Indiana stated a lack of understanding how this rule should apply to weekend fishermen the same as it applies to commercial fishermen who have a large investment in nets and boats. "You are talking about two different sets of people...if you want to make rules that's fine but I don't agree with it applying to commercial fishermen the same as it applies to individual weekend fishermen."

Jerald Dixon, from Vincennes, Indiana stated that there is no better eating than the 12 inch catfish noting that he did not want to eat the big fish. Dickson stated opposition to the proposed rule amendment.

Charles Young, from Vincennes, Indiana is a commercial fisherman who stated that a three and one-half foot one inch net with fiberglass hooks sells for \$380.00 not including tax or shipping in observing that commercial fishermen have expended a lot of money for their equipment.

According to Young, most of the people in favor of this proposal are guides who take people out fishing for \$150.00 to \$200.00 a day to catch big fish; therefore they want the big fish left in the water. He stated that he is not against the guides but expressed that "we all need to work together." He noted that he's thrown back a lot of 40-60 pound fish last year.

Young also raised several issues that are not relevant to the specific issue of the catfish rule amendments that are generally characterized as complaints that DNR's fish and wildlife staff should have vehicles with decals or other clear identification, the boat ramp near the St. Francisville Ferry needs to be taken care of, the DNR's biologists are in need supervision to protect taxpayer purchased equipment, and the Governor should not have transferred DNR funds to the general fund.

Ron Overton, from Fort Branch, Indiana stated that on more days than not he will not catch a 15" catfish but is more likely going to catch a 12" unless he gets "lucky". He stated that a 50% increase on the lower end is "too much of a jump."

Ray McCormick, from Vincennes, Knox County, Indiana stated that he fishes on the Ohio, Wabash and White Rivers. He stated first that every person who fishes in Indiana has paid into the Lake and River Enhancement Fund (LARE) supported by laws passed for the purpose of cleaning up, protecting and increasing the quality of the rivers and streams for the benefit of catfish and other fish species. "I would ask you to relay to the Governor of Indiana to quit taking those monies that we paid in for our lakes and rivers and put it back where it belongs and quit funding the general fund out of money that we have spent in this Indiana out of our sportsman's dollars for our streams and rivers."

He stated his appreciation for the opportunity for the public to provide their comments on this rule proposal stating that catfish should be managed "just like all other wildlife in this state." McCormick noted that people are not allowed to take all the deer they want because they can sell the meat and observed that nearly every game species are managed by rules. He stated, "I think we should have reasonable rules to protect the catfish." McCormick stated his belief that there is a huge slot of fish that can be taken without limit and that the rule is not intended to put anyone out of business. He concluded that to have a few trophy catfish in the rivers and ecosystem is reasonable.

Casey Lorenz, from Wabash, Indiana stated opposition to the jump from 10" to 15" stating that a 2 - 3" jump would be more appropriate. He noted that he fishes only for fun on the weekend and would be "doing good if I catch a fifteen inch catfish."

Tom Newlin, from Parke County, Indiana offered a comment on behalf of 500 members of the Montezuma Fish and Game Club. He stated that there are plenty of 12" catfish, which is the "best eater". He observed that if the minimum size is increased to 15" the only place you'll be able to find a 12" catfish is a farm-raised one at Kroger. As far as the big catfish, "we keep some of them we turn some of them back lose...they are your breeders." He noted that commercial fishermen are taking care of it themselves noting the lack of need for more government regulations and rules related to catfish. He noted that the real problem is the Asian Carp and

speculated that if something is not done about the carp now, in ten years that is the only species that will be in the rivers.

Jeff Horton, from Vincennes, Indiana stated that Asian Carp, which thrives on plankton, is endangering the catfish population by depleting the plankton that is also the main food source for young catfish. He expressed his opinion that regulating additional sizes of catfish is not going to benefit the species if the food source for young catfish is depleted. Horton said, "letting them grow up from 10" to 15" and 35" on up...they can breed all they want but if the little ones don't have anything to feed on to get started you're not saving nothing." Horton noted that he has been involved in commercial fishing since the early 1980s before the Asian Carp were present. At that time the catfish were more plentiful. He noted that instead of regulating catfish the need is to address the Asian Carp problem.

Horton also observed that the guides, who take 4 -6 people out at night are the ones who support this proposal but are the ones who will take out 4 - 6 trophy catfish in a night.

Ray Schlomer, Knox County, Indiana stated that he "leans both ways" and inquired how the proposal, if implemented, will be enforced. He expressed his belief that the money that would be necessary for enforcement could be better spent addressing the problem of Asian Carp.

Ben Goebel, from Evansville, Indiana stated that he is a sport fisherman on the Ohio River who fishes 3-4 times per week. He agreed with the previous comment that there are regulations on all game species and there should also be regulations in place to protect catfish. Goebel also noted that fish taken by individuals with guides are released so there is no loss to the resource as a result. Goebel expressed support for the proposed amendment.

Randy Merta, from Chandler, Indiana stated that he is a long-time commercial fisherman who made some inquiries of Tom Stefanavage (DNR fisheries biologist) after receiving notification about this rule proposal. He stated that the letter he received from the DNR cites studies and communications with other river states. His inquiries related to the quality of the Ohio River fishery as well as the studies, biology and science referred to by the DNR that support this proposal. Merta reported that Stefanavage advised him that the Ohio River fishery was "perfect" and that there were no studies conducted with respect to catfish on the Ohio River that pertain to the proposed rule amendment. Merta requested that "the Ohio River be removed from this proposal completely at this time." Merta recounted Stefanavage statement as from a view of DNR as a business, "there are club fishermen on one side and commercial fishermen on the other side...there's only 18 of you and a couple hundred of them. As a business, we [DNR] have to go with the majority."

He noted that as a commercial fisherman he has a good fiddler market and a 15" catfish is not a fiddler.

According to Merta, Stefanavage stated that there is no biology or science behind this proposal. Merta noted that each year deer harvest increase and that management is based on biologists who are out in the field. He observed that any proposed amendment to rules relating to catfish should be based on the same scientific and biologic data.

Merta stated that commercial fishermen take out thousands of pounds of Asian Carp and kill them annually. This is being done in conjunction with the commercial harvest of catfish and the commercial fishermen are the only ones doing it. He noted that he has never sold a catfish to a pay lake so he inquired as to how one pay lake in Ohio operates. Merta explained his understanding that at that one facility, there were three trophy lakes where people paid \$15.00 - \$20.00 for a fishing session. If they caught a trophy catfish they were photographed with the fish and the fish was released. At the same facility there was one lake where people could fish for as many small "keepers" as they wanted. The facility owner stated that his facility provides an opportunity for people with disabilities and for those who do not have boats or other access to the Rivers or other places. Merta noted that in Warrick County, where he also serves as a Deputy Sheriff, there is only approximately 100 feet of shoreline where an individual can fish. He concluded by stating that "I would like to see either a study or more science and biology put into it before a decision is made and for the record I am against it."

Mike Ballard, from Vincennes, Indiana stated that the price for both commercial and individual fishing licenses should be reduced.

Jason Van Patten, from Washington, Indiana stated that he has fished on the White River his entire life. He stated that there is a lot of research done involving the Wabash River, that reveals that the 10 -12" catfish are not reproductive and this supports the increase in the minimum size limit to 15". He observed a lack of understanding why the upper size limit for channel catfish was 28" and the upper limit for blue and flathead catfish was 35" noting that these size limits should be the same to avoid confusion. Van Patton offered his support for the proposed rule amendment adding a suggestion that a bag limit also be imposed. He noted that 40 years is too long for catfish to go unmanaged by the DNR when the DNR's website clearly shows on fisheries reports that this has been a concern for the DNR for at least 10 years.

With respect to matters outside the scope of this rule amendment, Van Patton suggested that additional conservation officer presence is needed on the White River and that the DNR should consider allowing carp as bait on rivers.

Travis Metheny, from Terre Haute, Indiana offered support for the rule amendments. He noted that what has worked for the past 40 years is not going to work forever. Metheny observed that things need changed now for the benefit of the future.

Bill Avery, from Evansville Indiana stated his belief that there is "some science there but there's a lot to be desired." As an angler, he stated that the fisheries are damaged and in danger. He stated that he does not have an opportunity to fish the Ohio River much but he has fished the inland rivers often for the past 30 years. In that time he has observed a "serious decline in the health of the catfishery." "It's just about not worth going." He stated that he would love to see more science that is readily available to the public. He also requested to see the commercial fishing reports. The hearing officer referred him to the DNR staff present to address this request.

Greg Schwipps, from Morgan County stated that he loves to sport fish for trophy catfish. His desire is to see a "body of rules to protect trophy catfish." The big fish have very little food value and are reportedly not really safe to eat. Schwipps also noted that a health catfish fishery is the only hope of "beating Asian Carp."

Tony Stevens, from Gibson County, Indiana stated that Asian Carp need to be dealt with and catfish rules should be left alone.

James Grubb, from Vincennes, Indiana stated that the 15" limit is too much of an increase. This change will eliminate the ability to take the best eating catfish in the river.

Mel Capps, from Evansville, Indiana stated that he has fished the Wabash River for 30 years and he stated that he has not observed a decline in catfish, including the trophy catfish. He stated his opinion that the rule should be left alone.

Robert Hendrixson, from Vincennes, Indiana requested that the hearing officer ask for a show of hands from the members of the public present how many would like to see the proposed 15" size limit reduced to 12-13" as opposed to how many would like to see the 15" size limit implemented. On doing so the clear majority of those present preferred a 12 – 13" size limit.

MARCH 22, 2011

James Reed, from Cincinnati, Ohio (Reedville, Ohio) stated that he has been a commercial fisherman for 30 years and is also a pay lake owner who believes there is no need for this rule proposal. He added that the blue catfish population has "exploded" observing that in 1993 there were no blue catfish in the "Cincinnati Pool" and now 30 – 50 pound blue catfish are common. He said when he started fishing the Cincinnati area in 1980 a 40 pound catfish was rarely seen and now they catch 40 – 60 pound catfish "daily." Reed observed that commercial fishing's biggest customer is the pay lake industry and that 80% of the fish presently caught by commercial fishermen will exceed the new proposed size limits because the demand is for the bigger catfish.

Reed noted that he is 47 years old and has "made a living catching catfish and selling them to pay lakes my whole life." I've invested my life into this and asked for "the people of the state of Indiana to have compassion" and consider the investment that has been made by commercial fishermen. He suggested that if Indiana wants to eliminate commercial fishing "put a lock on the licenses and when we're all dead and gone it's a done deal but don't throw away our investments and our lives."

Reed stated that 1,000 people per week fish for trophy catfish at his pay lake noting that his business is a benefit to the local economy. He noted that there are over 100 pay lakes in Ohio, 150 pay lakes in Kentucky and over 100 in West Virginia that need these big catfish that come from the Ohio River.

Reed agreed that "if these fish were being depleted from this river system then, yeah, there should be something done" but reiterated that the fish were abundant. Reed stated that a review

of the tournament fishing websites indicates that every year the tournament fishermen are exceeding previous year's catches, "more fish caught, bigger fish caught." Reed noted that the largest catfish caught in 2010 was out of the Ohio River. He concluded that the tournament fishermen are the ones who support the rule amendment proposal out of a "selfish" and "greedy" desire to maintain the large catfish in the rivers for their exclusive use while denying others the ability to fish for trophy catfish in pay lakes.

Reed noted also that an overabundance of catfish is detrimental to other species of fish including bass.

Reed added that he had over a million dollars invested in his commercial fishing and pay lake enterprises for which he catches 20,000 – 30,000 pounds of catfish annually. He stated that people do not fish pay lakes to catch little fish. Reed stated that if he were a sport fisherman he'd probably feel the same as the sport fishermen in attendance at the public hearing noting that it's hard to grasp the concept of 20,000 – 30,000 pounds of catfish. He invited those in attendance to go with him and they would see the abundance of catfish in the Ohio River. He stated that 30 – 50 pound catfish are "a dime a dozen" in the Ohio River noting that there is not as much pressure on catfish now as there has been in years past. Reed also noted that the Duracats have been posting records throughout 2007 – 2010 despite their present statements that the catfish fishery is in decline.

David Cox, from English, Indiana of Midwest Caviar stated that he depends on fishing and does not want to see anything happen to the catfishing although he fishes only for Paddlefish. Cox's comments reflected upon differences in the way that Indiana and Kentucky handled the implementation of size limits and season establishment for the taking of paddlefish noting that Indiana acted under an emergency rule while Kentucky authorities had meetings and discussions to address the situation in a way that was fair to the "fishermen and the fish."

Cox expressed that Indiana "hates commercial fishermen and they want commercial fishing quit." He observed that he relies on commercial fishing noting that Indiana and Kentucky need to have complimentary rules. Cox expressed his belief that the Indiana DNR views commercial fishermen as a "pain in the butt" and is attempting to eliminate commercial fishing altogether. Cox also noted that the major commercial fishing operations are located in Ohio and Kentucky, not Indiana.

Cox stated that he fishes for Paddlefish using 5" and 6" web always using 2 boats and sometimes using 3 boats, 7 days per week from November to April. On a daily basis he catches few catfish under 20 pounds and on a weekly basis estimated that he caught 40 catfish that ranged from 40 – 60 pounds. All the catfish he catches are released.

Dave Cottrell, from Shelbyville, Kentucky offered that commercial fishermen "catch thousands of pounds of bighead and silver carp and destroy them so they are actually helping the catfish." He stated his opinion that without the commercial fishermen removing the large number of carp the carp population will explode creating harm to the catfish.

Cottrell also noted that the tournament fishermen are responsible for increases in catfish mortality following a tournament. He stated that he fishes around Westport, Kentucky where tournaments are frequently held and has observed large number of dead catfish on the banks 2 -3 days following a tournament. He stated support for the tournament fishing but expressed frustration over the tournament fishermen's placement of blame upon the commercial fishermen when they don't catch anything. Cottrell observed also that there are more catfish in the rivers now than ever also noting that catfish tournament sponsors are posting on their websites some of the largest catfish ever caught.

Cottrell also noted that there would be difficulty in enforcing the new size limits because the Indiana side and the Ohio side of the river will have different rules and there will be no way to prove or disprove which State the big catfish came from. Cottrell stated "we've got certain game wardens in our area that hate commercial fishing and all they do is harass...and they are gonna come out in our boat and tell us that we caught our 2 big fish on their side of the river and they're gonna give us a ticket...they take our stuff and they don't press charges they just hold it for evidence for years." Cottrell added, "There's plenty of fish for everybody."

Ken Lewis, from Morgan County, Indiana offered a comment on behalf of sport fishermen and Duracats. He stated that catfish taken during tournaments on the Ohio River have declined in size. He stated that in a two year period including 2006 and 2007 the tournaments weighed in 15,000 pounds of catfish. More recently the tournaments have only weighed in 15,000 pounds of catfish for a three year period including 2008 through and including 2010. Lewis observed that in 2007 and before a tournament fisherman who did not have 6 fish totaling over 100 pounds was not going to "draw a paycheck" but now if 6 catfish total 90 pounds "you're probably gonna win." Lewis acknowledged that they do catch big catfish and records are being broken but noted that in 2007 the average weight per fish caught during tournaments on the Ohio was 17.61 pounds whereas the average in 2010 was 13.68 pounds. The years 2008 and 2009 revealed that this was a steady decline over the past 4 years. The averaged sizes on the Wabash declined by 21% and on the White River by 22% over the same time period. Lewis also observed that it's the same fishermen who are fishing now as in 2007 so the fishing skill is not diminished. "These are the same guys; the guys who fish for Duracats have been fishing the same series for years. They're not worse fishermen; they still go to the Mississippi and finish in the money in the big Cabellas and Bass Pro tournaments."

Lewis also noted that commercial fishing reports reveal that in 2006 the Department sold 37 commercial fishing licenses and 760 additional net tags with a 16,955 creel limit. That equates to 458 pounds of catfish per license with commercial fishermen reporting income of only \$1,375.00 per year for a monthly income of \$114.06. Lewis further observed that in 2007 there were 41 commercial fishing licenses and 860 net tags sold. With four additional licenses and 100 additional net tags sold commercial fishermen reported only taking 11,789 total pounds of catfish in 2007 for an annual profit of \$862.00 per license. (Upon questioning by Lewis, Reed indicated that the pay lakes pay \$1.00 - \$3.00 per pound for the big catfish). Lewis observed, "The numbers just don't add up."

Lewis explained that he does not blame anyone 100% and noted that he has no problem with the pay lakes but continued by stating that there is a problem and that too many of the big catfish are

going to the pay lakes. He observed also that every time a big catfish is taken it is the equivalent of killing a gene pool. He also noted that he is infuriated by the waste of large catfish that he has seen. Lewis also noted that the only natural predator to the carp is the catfish. Lewis concluded that he does "not begrudge anyone a living" but regardless of the cause of the catfish decline "we have to do something."

Ron Streeter, from Indianapolis, Indiana stated that he is a sport fisherman and a member of Duracats. He noted that the survival rate of the large catfish at the pay lakes is not good noting that he has observed the pay lake operators "walk around and pick up way more dead catfish out of pay lakes than what we've ever picked up along the river" after a tournament. He noted that the temperatures in many of the pay lakes are too high for the fish. Streeter stated that he has been fishing seriously for 10 years and has observed a serious decline over the past 3 years. He also noted that he's observed increase numbers of nets, limb lines, pole lines, and jug lines, on the Ohio, the Wabash and the south end of the White River in the past 2 years. Streeter concluded that he does not know the cause of the catfish decline but the tournament fishermen are willing to do their part. He observed that the proposed limits are applicable to everyone noting that if the commercial fishermen catch "two a day times 200 days, that's 400 fish they're selling getting \$3.00 per pound. There's his money right there."

Streeter, in a later comment noted his displeasure with the use of a natural resource by the pay-lake operators for private enterprise.

Chelsea Merta, from Warrick County but residing in Monroe County, Indiana stated that her interest in this issue is both because she is a Biology student at IU and because her father is a commercial fisherman. She explained that there is no science with respect to the Ohio River that supports this proposed rule amendment. She also stated that channel and flathead catfish are listed on the national list of invasive species noting that Pennsylvania and Ohio "want those types of catfish out of the rivers because they are destroying all the aquatic wildlife." She expressed puzzlement over the DNR's desire to conserve them because they destroy other sport fish.

Warren Mathies, from Boonville, Indiana entered his appearance as the attorney for commercial fishermen, Randy Merta, Heath Frailley, David Cox, Charlie Frailley, David Woodward, Tracy Ellis, James Reed, Dave Cottrell, Joshua Cottrell, Robert Yockey and Melvin Sanders. A copy of the written appearance is contained within the Natural Resources Commission Division of Hearings file but is not reproduced within this report. Mathies offered that there is a lot of passion on both sides of this issue and noted that it is difficult to reach agreement on anything. He noted that among the commercial fishermen he represents there is a common belief that this rule amendment proposal is premature. He added that a "one size fits all approach across all catfish is problematic." Mathies agreed that the report relied upon by the DNR is a "good report" but noted that the person who prepared that report also prepared a PhD dissertation relating to channel and flathead catfish on the Wabash River based upon the same sampling of catfish. Mathies submitted a 10-page excerpt of the dissertation for the official record which has been attached as Exhibit A1, and is incorporated within this report.

Mathies, quoting the dissertation, stated, "The results for flathead catfish make apparent the need for a better understanding of the blue catfish demographics, as blue catfish are disproportionately harvested compared to my standardized sampling...different species of catfish may need differing management regulations. As the life history of the three species of catfish differ markedly differing regulations may be advisable."

Mathies noted that, quoting again from the dissertation, "As the density has decreased the remaining catfish have experienced a competitive release allowing for better condition and faster growth." Mathies observed that this might be an area where the sport fishermen and the commercial fishermen could find some common ground and in reality "help each other out" whether they agree "in this room" or not. Mathies noted that finding a "common thread and regulating it properly can create a world where they both cohabitate."

Mathies stated, based upon the dissertation that the preliminary models suggest that further regulation on the Wabash River is not necessary and the fishery is sustainable under the current regulatory scenario. With respect to flathead catfish the preliminary indication is that one length for all three species is "undesirable." Mathies also reflected upon the dissertation's conclusion that the Ohio River and the Wabash River are two entirely different fisheries that need to be addressed individually. Mathies concluded that there is a need for more study; more research and a more reasoned and careful approach taken to this regulation.

Mathies added that the fiscal analyses prepared by the DNR, which concludes that the proposed rule amendment will have only a \$300.00 impact per person, is incorrect. Mathies stated that the reports cited by Ken Lewis (*See comment above*) are voluntary and "probably don't reflect what's really happening." Instead Mathies acknowledged that instead of the figures reported by the commercial fishermen there is a "significant amount of income generated" by commercial fishing. He stated also that the fiscal analyses do not consider interstate commerce in that some of the commercial fishermen impacted by this rule are from Ohio and Kentucky. Mathies stated his opinion that "when one state takes or affects the interstate commerce of another state it gives them a much higher standing to come back and challenge this rule."

Joseph Schigur, from Eckron, Kentucky is an owner of a processing facility in English, Indiana. He stated that he has \$500,000.00 invested in the facility that is one of three in the United States that can export to Europe. Schigur's facility presently processes primarily paddlefish but is "working on a deal" to export catfish to Europe. He acknowledged that he can sell any size of catfish so this amendment proposal will not hurt him near as bad as it will the pay lake operators and commercial fishermen who sell to the pay lakes. He estimates that 30 commercial fishermen will lose their livelihood if this amendment proposal is adopted. Schigur also expressed concern that paddlefish will come under a similar scrutiny in the near future.

Schigur stated that the Asian Carp problem will not be addressed without the commercial fishermen.

Bill Avery, Morgan County, Indiana acknowledged that the science is lacking. He noted that sport fishermen say the catfish are being depleted and the commercial fishermen say they are abundant. He pondered what should be done and whether the livelihood of the commercial

fishermen be put ahead of "good conservation efforts." Avery expressed his desire that the two sides of this issue should get together and discuss it.

Tracy Ellis, from Chesapeake, Ohio is a commercial fisherman who fishes with hoop nets. He explained that they are not taking catfish out of the river every day given that there is typically a 5 week window in the spring and a 4 week window in the fall to take fish with hoop nets. In the summer when the catfish are "egged up" they will not bite. He offered the opinion that it's not right to put commercial fishermen out of business because the tournament fishermen want to be able to catch 80 pound catfish instead of 60 pound catfish.

He explained that the big catfish need to be thinned out in order to allow improvement of the fishery. He reiterated that catfish are more abundant now and there are also more big fish now than ever before.

Melvin Sowders, from Reynolds Station, Kentucky is a commercial fisherman who makes his living from catfish. He explained his observation that everything on the river is changing, that the shad and skip jack are disappearing and that these changes can't be blamed on commercial fishermen. He said he thought 20 years ago the catfish were depleted but it turned out they were not. He acknowledged that there is some science supporting the proposed amendment but insisted based upon his personal observations that there are an abundance of catfish available. Sowders concluded that the passage of this rule amendment will destroy the lives of commercial fishermen.

Dwight Keller, from Lafayette, Indiana stated that it comes down to facts and there needs to be more biological studies and more scientific research conducted objectively by people who have no special interest in the outcome. The data needs to determine what is truly going on with the fishery. Keller stated that he has fished pay lakes and noted that pay lakes don't need to have monster fish because the good eating sized catfish are less than five pounds. He advised that he doesn't want to hurt anyone's livelihood but believes there needs to be regulation for these fish and the pay lakes can be stocked with fish of sizes that are allowed by the proposed rule amendments.

Charley Frailley, from Rumsey, Kentucky is a commercial fisherman and pay lake owner. He stated that he has fished the river for 40 years and that there are fish there. Frailley stated that pay lake users "like to catch the big fish just like you guys do." He reiterated the need to make this decision "based on facts and figures, not on politics."

Greg Schwipps, from Morgan County, Indiana explained his understanding that a blue or flathead catfish at 35" long is approximately 12 years old and a channel catfish at 28" long is approximately 16 years old. He observed that he wished it was known how many of this size catfish are in the rivers and streams. In response to other comments that urges the different species of catfish to be treated differently, Schwipps noted that the rule amendment as proposed does treat channel catfish differently than the blue and flathead catfish. He stated that he did not wish to see commercial fishermen put out of business but pondered how this rule could have that impact when it allow the unlimited harvest of catfish over 15 inches long up to 28 inches long for channel catfish and up to 35 inches for blue and flathead catfish. Schwipps further noted that he

pays for Indiana natural resources through the purchase of fishing licenses and does not like to see that natural resource that he pays for being used for the private gain of pay lake owners.

Randy Merta, from Warrick County, Indiana stated that commercial fishing is consumer based and the pay lakes are available for those people who cannot fish on the rivers or who choose not to fish on the rivers. Catfishing success, according to Merta is based upon variable factors including the weather, temperatures, water levels, etc. noting that catfish are always moving and the population in any one location is always fluctuating. In stating his opposition to the rule amendment proposal, Merta noted that for commercial fishermen catfishing is not a sport it is a livelihood.

Tim Fox, from Morgan County, Indiana representing Duracats stated that he is a sport and tournament fisherman for 40 plus years who supports the rule amendment proposed. He observed that he does not want the commercial fishermen to be put out of business but questioned how many 40 plus pound fish one pay lake needs. Fox acknowledged that every water body needs to be treated individually noting that the "Ohio is a totally different animal."

Winston Bush, from Hamilton County, Indiana stated that he is not "anti pay-lake" or "anti commercial fishing" but noted that with few exceptions the unregulated use of natural resources for private enterprise has ended up in trouble. He stated his opinion that no one's livelihood will be effected by the proposed rule that allows the continued unlimited harvest of catfish over 15" up to 28" for channel catfish and up to 35" for blue and flathead catfish unless the commercial fishermen are intentionally targeting channel catfish over 28" and blue and flathead catfish over 35". Bush stated that James Reed's pay-lake's website states that 40,000 pound of catfish will be stocked in 2011 and noted the impact that this amount of consumption multiplied by hundreds of pay lakes must be having upon the catfish resources. Bush noted that he'd heard others comment about "whiney and greedy" sport fishermen and noted the "hypocrisy" of that statement that he believed could be "leveled back at the commercial fishermen" in light of the pay lakes' catfish consumption for profit instead of for sport. Bush noted that these same rules will apply equally to catfish tournament fishermen noting that "everybody is chipping in." Bush observed from personal fishing experience that the "fishing is not as good now as in the past." He expressed support for the rule amendment as proposed offering also that the rule may not be completely right and may need refining in the future but observing that doing nothing will be "disaster."

EXHIBIT A1

Submitted by: Commercial Fisherman
showing difference in species
of catfish

DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE ECOLOGICAL ROLE OF THE CHANNEL CATFISH
(*ICTALURUS PUNCTATUS*) IN COMMERCIALLY EXPLOITED AND
UNEXPLOITED REACHES OF THE WABASH RIVER WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR
THE FLATHEAD CATFISH (*PYLODICTIS OLIVARIS*)

by

Robert E. Colombo II
B.S., State University of New York, 1998
M.S., Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, 2004
A Dissertation

Submitted for the Requirements of the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
Department of Zoology
In the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
December 2007

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE ECOLOGICAL ROLE OF THE CHANNEL CATFISH
(*ICTALURUS PUNCTATUS*) IN COMMERCIALLY EXPLOITED AND
UNEXPLOITED REACHES OF THE WABASH RIVER WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR
THE FLATHEAD CATFISH (*PYLODICTIS OLIVARIS*)

By

Robert E. Colombo II
A Dissertation Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the field of Zoology
Approved by:
James Garvey, Chair
Roy Heidinger, Co-Chair
Greg Whittedge
Eric Schaubert
Ernest Lewis
Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
17 September 2007

INTRODUCTION

The Wabash River currently sustains a large catfish commercial fishery with an unknown level of sport fishing. An interesting attribute of this river is that it is a boundary fishery, with the lower 322 km forming the southern border of Indiana and Illinois. Currently, two minimum length limits are in effect in this boundary fishery. In Indiana, the catfish fishery is managed as a "fiddler" fishery (254-mm) allowing the commercial fishers to harvest the smaller catfish. This is contrasted with the current 381-mm minimum size limit in Illinois. Recently the harvest of the catfish has been similar

between the two states, with Indiana fishers harvesting approximately 20 tons (Stefanavage 1999) and the Illinois commercial fishers harvesting 22 tons annually (Maher 2002); this equates to 84 kg of catfish harvested per river kilometer. Understanding how commercial harvest affects populations is essential for effective management of sustainable stocks. If left unchecked, catfish populations can become overfished, leading to reductions in yield and recruitment (Pitlo 1997). Fisheries yield modeling is one approach that has been used to determine the influence of

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commercial exploitation of exploited fish stocks (Quist et al. 2002, Colombo et al. 2007). Models such as the Beverton-Holt yield per recruit model have been used to estimate the yield of populations as a function of alternative management strategies (Maceina et al. 1998, Slipke et al. 1998, Slipke et al. 2002, Quist et al. 2002, Colombo et al. 2007). These models require information on the growth and mortality of the population, both of which are currently available for the channel catfish in the Wabash River (Chapter 2 and 3).

The spawning potential ratio (SPR) is used to assess how harvest affects the reproductive potential of females in a population (Slipke et al. 2002). The SPR estimates the potential proportion of eggs a recruit will produce in an exploited population compared to that of an unexploited one. As fishing mortality increases the SPR declines towards zero. For many marine fisheries, a SPR of 30% is considered the critical value below which the population reaches recruitment overfishing (Goodyear 1993). The critical SPR of the commercially exploited population of channel catfish in the Upper Mississippi River was determined to be between 10 and 20% (Slipke et al. 2002). Information is needed on the sex ratio, female's maturation schedule and fecundity to determine the SPR for Wabash River stocks. Exclusive of the sex ratio, these specific data are currently lacking. However, this is information available for similar populations in large midwestern rivers (Pflieger 1997, Slipke et al. 2002). Although these data do not substitute for ones derived directly from the Wabash River population, they do provide a good starting point.

The current commercial regulations in the Wabash River do not distinguish between species of catfishes. The proportion of flathead catfish collect during this study

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was different than the proportion in the two states commercial harvest reports, suggesting that differential harvest of flathead catfish in the Wabash River may occur. Flathead catfish comprised 8% of the total catch during the fall sampling of this study; however, flathead catfish comprise 26% of the commercial harvest (Maher 2002, Stefanavage 1999). Because of their life history flathead catfish may be more susceptible to over harvest compared to the channel catfish. Flathead catfish reach maximum size slowly, mature late, and when unexploited have high annual survival and are long lived (Jackson 1999, Jackson and Jackson 1999, Kwak et al. 2004, Makinster 2006). Therefore, it is also important to determine how these length limits may be affecting the flathead population in the Wabash.

In this chapter, I predict the impact that commercial fishing is having on the channel and flathead catfish populations in the Wabash River using yield-per-recruit modeling. These models predict how different length limits would affect the population yield. The results of these models were used to determine the level harvest mortality the

channel catfish fishery could withstand while remaining sustainable. Finally, I also predicted how harvest affected sustainability of the flathead catfish populations under the current length limits.

METHODS

Channel catfish populations of the two commercially exploited treatment reaches (IN & IL and IN) along with the flathead catfish population of the Wabash River were modeled using the Beverton-Holt equilibrium yield model (Ricker 1975) in the yield-per-recruit

function in Fishery Analysis and Simulation Tools (FAST) software (Slipke and Maceina 2000). The FAST yield per recruit model is actually a modification of the

original Beverton-Holt model (Ricker 1975; Slipke et al. 2002), but it is similar to yieldmodels of other programs (Quist et al. 2002). The Beverton-Holt yield-per-recruit model estimates yield using the following formula (Slipke and Macenia 2000):

$$\frac{W_e N F Y}{Z r} = \frac{K}{\beta_0} \left(\frac{1 - e^{-K(t - t_0)}}{1 - e^{-K(\text{Max Age} - t_0)}} \right)^{\beta_0} \frac{P}{Q}$$

where

W_e = maximum theoretic weight estimated from L_{∞} and the Log_{10} length against Log_{10} weight regression; K = the Brody growth constant from the von Bertalanffy model; β_0 = the incomplete beta function; $X = e^{-Kr}$; $X_1 = e^{-K(\text{Max Age} - t_0)}$, Max Age is the maximum age from the sample and t_0 = the theoretic time at which length equals zero; $P = Z/K$; and $Q =$

Zr

t, \dots, \dots

$\beta \beta - = \infty$

where F = instantaneous fishing mortality; N_t = the number of recruits entering the fishery at some time t ; Z = instantaneous mortality rate; r = time to recruitment ($t_r - t_0$); W_{∞} = maximum theoretic weight estimated from L_{∞} and the Log_{10} length against Log_{10} weight regression; K = the Brody growth constant from the von Bertalanffy model; β_0 = the incomplete beta function; $X = e^{-Kr}$; $X_1 = e^{-K(\text{Max Age} - t_0)}$, Max Age is the maximum age from the sample and t_0 = the theoretic time at which length equals zero; $P = Z/K$; and $Q =$ slope of the length-weight regression +1.

Several parameters are needed to run the simulation models using FAST.

Information regarding the growth rate, longevity, and the length-weight regression was calculated from the data collected during this study (Table 17) (Chapters 2 and 3). For the minimum length limits I used 254, 330, and 381-mm coinciding with the Indiana, intermediate, and Illinois length limits respectively (Table 17). The mortality estimate from the NON treatment (Chapter 3) provided an estimate of conditional natural mortality. This value is well within levels reported for other populations of channel catfish (Hubert 1999; Slipke et al. 2002).

To estimate how yield was affected by harvest, I modeled the populations over varying conditional fishing mortality (F). For the IN & IL treatment reach, the lowest minimum conditional fishing mortality was 15 %, which was the difference in mortality between the NON and IN & IL treatment reaches (Table 17). As a starting point for the

IN treatment 8% fishing mortality was used, which was the difference in mortality between the non-commercially fished (NON) and adjacent commercially fished (IN) treatment reach (Table 17). A value of 60% conditional fishing mortality was used as the maximum mortality for both populations (Table 17).

In the yield-per-recruit models, the inflection point in the conditional fishing mortality against yield plot (F_{max}) was considered the point at which growth overfishing

began to occur. The 10% rule ($F_{0.1}$ = fishing mortality that leads to a slope 10% of the slope at $F = 0$, King 2001) was used to determine the level of mortality that maintained a sustainable fishery (Hilborn and Walters 1992, Haddon 2001, King 2001). The 10% rule is more conservative than F_{max} and has been shown to produce sustainable levels of harvest (Hilborn and Walters 1992, Haddon 2001, King 2001).

The effect of harvest on the reproductive potential of the population was estimated by simulating the spawning potential ratio (SPR). The SPR has been used extensively in marine systems (Goodyear 1993) and has recently been used to determine the point of recruitment overfishing in freshwater systems (Quist et al. 2002, Slipke et al. 2002). The SPR estimates the number of eggs produced in an exploited fishery compared to an unexploited one by estimating the fecundity potential of the recruits using the formula (Goodyear 1993):

$$\sum_{i=0}^n \prod_{j=1}^i S_{ij} E_i SEP$$

where n = number of age classes in an unfished population; E_i = the mean fecundity of females of age i ; $S_{ij} = e^{-(F_{ij} + M_{ij})}$, the density-independent annual survival probabilities of females age i ; F_{ij} = instantaneous fishing mortality rate of females age i ; and M_{ij} = instantaneous natural mortality rate of females age i .

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Calculation of SPR requires estimates of age at sexual maturation, length at fecundity, and percentage of females spawning annually. These parameters based on studies from other populations of channel catfish in midwestern rivers. Age at sexual maturation (3 years) of females was taken from Pflieger (1997) (Table 17). The relationship between length and fecundity and the percentage of females spawning annually were derived from Slipke et al. (2002). Because the sex ratio of channel catfish in the Wabash River did not differ from one to one (Chapter 2) the percentage of females in the population was set at 50%. I used a critical SPR level of 20% (i.e., allowing fish to meet 20% of their maximum expected reproductive potential) as the minimum level of SPR that was necessary to avoid recruitment overfishing of channel catfish (Slipke et al. 2002).

Demographic information was limited for flathead catfish; however, I was able to estimate the annual mortality rate (33%), and a length weight regression from the fish sampled during this study (Appendix B; Table 17). Because I did not remove the pectoral spines of the largest flathead catfish, a von Bertalanffy model was developed from 311 flathead collected by INDNR during spring 2005 in which the spines of all fish were removed (Colombo et al. *unpublished data*) (Table 17, appendix B). Conditional natural mortality was set at 0.15 which was similar to an unexploited population of flathead catfish (Kwak et al. 2004) (Table 17). Reproductive information regarding the flathead catfish was not available so, the spawning potential ratio was not calculated.

RESULTS

The Boundary Fishery (IN & IL treatment reach)

Across the levels of conditional fishing mortality that were used in this model, the only length limit that resulted in the channel catfish population approaching growth overfishing (i.e., individuals were harvested before contributing to the population's maximum potential yield) was the 254-mm (Indiana) limit (Figure 43). This level was approached at a conditional fishing mortality of 33% (Figure 43). With a 254-mm length limit the fishery was sustainable ($F_{0.1}$) until fishing mortality reached 25%, compared to fishing mortalities of 35% and 42% for the 330 and 381-mm length limits respectively (Figure 43). The mean length of fish harvested decreased most rapidly over the range of fishing mortalities modeled with the 254-mm limit compared to the 330 and 381-mm limits (Figure 44). Mean length harvested at the 254-mm length limit declined by 17% across the range of fishing mortality (Figure 44). The mean length of fish harvested declined by 11% and 8% in the 330 and 381-mm length limits respectively across the range of conditional fishing mortality (Figure 44). Reducing the minimum length limit reduced the mean size harvested and the total population yield, with the 254-mm limit incurring a much greater effect at moderate increases relative to current fishing mortality. Both the 254 and 330-mm length limits caused the fishery to decline below the critical SPR value of 0.20 (20%), with increasing conditional fishing mortality (Figure 45). At the 254-mm minimum length limit, the critical limit was reached at 33% conditional fishing mortality (Figure 45). This coincided with the reduction in yield found at the 254-mm minimum size requirement for $F > 0.35$ (Figure 43). At the 330-mm minimum length limit, the critical SPR was reached at a conditional fishing mortality

of 48% (Figure 45). However, there was no reduction in yield over the entire range of fishing mortality. When subjected to the 381-mm minimum length limit the population did not decline to the critical SPR of 0.20 (Figure 45).

The Indiana Fishery (IN treatment reach)

I obtained similar results occurred in the IN treatment reach. With a 254-mm minimum length limit, yield was maximized at 33% fishing mortality compared to 52% at the 330-mm minimum length limit (Figure 46). For the IN treatment reach, the fishery remained sustainable over a narrower range of fishing mortalities compared to the IN & IL treatment reach (Figure 43 and 45). With a 254-mm length limit, the fishery was sustainable ($F_{0.1}$) to 21% conditional fishing mortality compared to 27% and 33% for the 330 and 381-mm length limits (Figure 46). As was the case for the IN & IL treatment reach the 381-mm minimum length limit produced the highest maximum yield (Figure 46). With increasing fishing mortality, there was a large decline in the mean length of fish harvested with the 254-mm length limit (Figure 47). Over the entire range of fishing mortalities the 254-mm limit resulted in a 22% reduction in mean total length harvested (Figure 47). With the 330 and 381-mm limits there were reductions of 16% and 12% respectively and higher overall mean lengths harvested (Figure 47).

Results for the SPR for the IN treatment reach were similar to that of the IN & IL treatment reach. Again SPR within the 254-mm limit declined to the critical value at fairly low levels of harvest (32%) (Figure 48). The population subjected to a 330-mm limit reached the critical SPR value of 0.20 at a conditional fishing mortality of 47%

(Figure 48). With a 381-mm limit, the critical SPR was not reached over this range of 118

conditional fishing mortalities. The lowest SPR reached with a 381-mm limit was 0.26 (Figure 48). As in the IN&IL treatment reach, the current length limit of 254-mm will likely lead to both growth and recruitment overfishing with modest increases in harvest. Flathead Catfish

The Beverton-Holt model suggested at the current level of mortality (33%) the flathead catfish population would be overfished if there was a 254-mm minimum length limit (Figure 49). The same was true if both states adopted a 330-mm minimum length limit (Figure 49). Additionally, based on an annual mortality rate of 33% the population of flathead catfish in the Wabash River is approaching F_{max} for a 381-mm minimum length limit (Figure 49).

DISCUSSION

Based solely on biomass yield, the channel catfish populations of the Wabash River do not appear to be overfished at the current minimum length limits and harvest level. However, the models predicted that increases in harvest under the current 254-mm limit would potentially lead to both overfishing of young fish that have not yet contributed fully to population biomass as well as to overfishing of females that are critical to reproductive success. Several outcomes are possible under the modeling scenarios presented herein. If both agencies adopted a 254-mm minimum length limit, I predict that a modest increase in commercial harvest would occur, although the maximum yield would be unattainable due to growth and perhaps recruitment overfishing. If both Indiana and Illinois adopted a 330-mm minimum length limit, the models predicted that fishery would yield a higher maximum biomass with increased 119

harvest. At the current fishing intensity, the third management scenario where both Indiana and Illinois adopt a 381-mm minimum length may lead to a reduction in the overall biomass harvested. However, a much higher fishing intensity could be supported which would produce a larger maximum biomass yield.

I would not recommend that both state agencies adopt a 254-mm minimum length limit. With the 254-mm minimum limit, the population would likely become overfished with a modest increase in harvest. Such an increase in harvest would likely occur if Illinois adopted a 254-mm minimum limit. Judging by the sentiment of the Illinois commercial fishers the current demand for fiddler catfish in Illinois would cause an increase in the harvest of catfish in the Wabash River. Selective harvest of intermediatesized

individuals in the IN&IL treatment reach may lead to a channel catfish population with high PSD values similar to what is occurring in the IN treatment reach currently. Although the PSD would increase due to the fish recruiting out of the gear, the tradeoff would be reduced catch rates and perhaps greater susceptibility to collapse. This is currently not a concern in the IN treatment reach because of the apparently low commercial harvest rate.

At the intermediate combined minimum length limit of 330-mm, both mean length and sustainable harvest increased appreciably. This option represents a balance between commercial and sport fishing, still allowing for take of some desirable smallsized

individuals by commercial fishers. Due to a reduction in the impact on small, young fish with a high, unachieved reproductive potential, the population abundance should increase, leading to higher angler catch rates in the river.

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The final scenario would be a change of Indiana's regulation to that of 381-mm.

The models predicted that this type of limit would allow for the greatest amount yield by commercial fishing. With a 381-mm limit the catfish populations in the Wabash River could withstand a 45% increase in the conditional fishing mortality and still not be overfished. Mean length of the fish harvested would theoretically increase, perhaps leading to improved recreational fishing satisfaction. However, the harvest of desirable fiddler sized catfish would be curtailed. It is also important to note that increased competition for large individuals between commercial and recreational interests might occur. Hence, the availability of the largest catfish for anglers may decline because they would be increasingly removed by the commercial harvest.

Channel catfish populations in the Wabash River are responsive to fishing.

Harvest appears to be sustainable under the present scenario. However, increases in the current level of harvest, particularly of small individuals near the 254-mm Indiana limit, may lead to a rapid decline in reproductive potential of the population. Further, catch per unit effort will most likely decline with increased harvest rates because the maximum yield of the population under the current minimum length limit is quite low compared to larger length limits. Hence, harvest needs to be closely monitored to prevent overfishing from occurring. Further, many of these recommendations are founded in assumptions about the reproductive capacity of the population. A refined understanding of reproductive potential of the catfish in Wabash River and their subsequent recruitment success is needed to determine how resilient the current stocks are to changes in harvest. Commercial fishers are harvesting flathead catfish at a disproportionate rate compared to their availability, based on my fall sampling. Yield-per-recruit modeling for

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flathead catfish suggests that the population in the Wabash River is currently being overfished. Using similar length limits as those for channel catfish did not provide for a sustainable flathead fishery, due to the life history of the flathead catfish having slow growth, long life spans, and low rates of natural mortality (Kwak et al. 2004, Makinster 2006). More research into the population dynamics of the flathead catfish in the Wabash River needs to be accomplished so that an estimate of the sexual demographics can be made to determine if the population is undergoing recruitment overfishing. The results for flathead catfish make apparent the need for a better understanding of the blue catfish demographics, as blue catfish are also disproportionately harvested compared to my standardized sampling. Furthermore, if the harvest of flathead catfish is not sustainable under any of the proposed minimum length limits, different species of catfish may need differing management regulations. As the life history of the three species of catfish differ markedly differing management regulations may be advisable.

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Table 17. Life history parameters used to model the channel and flathead catfish populations from the two treatment reaches of the Wabash River. Where L_{∞} = maximum length from the von Bertalanffy model (mm); K = Brody's growth coefficient from von Bertalanffy model; t_0 = length at time equal to zero; b = slope of the length weight

340
360
380
400
420
440
460
254 mm
330 mm
381 mm

Figure 44. Predicted changes in mean length of channel catfish harvested with increasing conditional fishing mortality at three different length limits for the IN & IL treatment reach of the Wabash River.

Final Conclusions

My results suggest that commercial exploitation is affecting the channel catfish population in the Wabash River. Harvest seems to have caused a decrease in the density of fish in the commercially exploited treatment reaches. This change in density was coupled with a apparent shift in the length frequency distributions in the different treatment reaches. Further, the reduction in density resulted from an increase in the population level mortality. As the density has decreased the remaining catfish have experienced a competitive release allowing for better condition and faster growth. The modeling suggested that the fishery is currently sustainable under the current management scenarios. These populations would be susceptible to overharvest if Illinois would adopt a length limit similar to that of Indiana.

currently sustainable

A final interesting finding of this study is the un-exploited treatment reach acted similar to that of other fisheries reserves. I found that on this reserve the density of fish was higher. Similar to other studies (Fabrizio et al. 2001, Gadmark et al. 2006), this high density led to catfish in poorer condition that grew slower. The effect that this treatment reach may have as a source of colonists is unknown, but, would be an interesting parameter to incorporate into future models.

Several questions have been answered during this study. And, of course, new gaps in the knowledge have been uncovered. A refined, reach-specific maturation schedule and size-dependent fecundity relationships for channel catfish in the Wabash

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River are needed to better refine my predictions. Furthermore, reach-specific sport and commercial fishing effort and harvest will allow for the determination of reach-specific management protocols. Teasing apart the contribution of commercial and recreational harvest to fishing mortality will improve estimates of fishing and natural mortality and allow refinement of the models. All of my interpretations rely on the assumption that catfish remain largely stationary within each treatment reach, which a preliminary tagging study supports (Colombo *unpublished data*). Size-dependent movement among the treatment reaches and between the Wabash River and adjacent systems (e.g., the White River and the Ohio River) would greatly alter my conclusions and recommendations. Furthermore the preliminary model of the flathead catfish yield suggests one length limit for all species of catfish may be undesirable. More research needs to be done to target the demographics of blue and flathead catfish in the Wabash

River. Stable isotope analysis provided preliminary evidence suggesting that the consumers in the Wabash may be deriving their energy from different autotrophic sources; however, more information on the lower consumers as well as instream primary production sources needs to be evaluated. Many of these questions are currently being addressed by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources which will lead to an improved understanding of the dynamics of catfish populations in the Wabash River.

EXHIBIT B

[Download Data](#)

Commentor Name Gaylen Pickard

Commentor County 84

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Terre Haute

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment We are not in favor of increasing the size limit on channel catfish to 15 inches from 10 for sport fishing, Maybe 12 inches but 15 is a bit much, a 50 % increase in size. Thanks for allowing input.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Hershel Neff III

Commentor County 28

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Linton

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment It appears your wording in Section 3 is such that an individual is not allowed to take a channel catfish less than 28" in length from any state owned lake. Neither is an individual allowed to take a flathead or blue catfish less than 35" in length from any state owned lake. Every year Indiana publishes the "Indiana Fish Consumption Advisory" a report on contaminates in fish for their size and location. Nearly all catfish longer than 27" fall into category 4 or 5 for advisories on consumption. If the new rules are passed as written, this would mean that Indiana intends for channel, flathead, and blue catfish to be kept for trophy purposes only since all safe sizes for consumption would be protected in state owned lakes.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Robert W Thrasher III

Commentor County 53

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Springville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I think the new rules would help the hunting in Indiana deer grow to there more potential bucks, and attract more hunters to Indiana. We have great food sources and opportunity to grow larger size bucks. We just need better rules and I like the shorting of fire arm season. This would allow less bucks harvested in the rut. I like the idea harvest a doe before buck. We need change to are deer hunting rules to have better deer hunting.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Greg Schwipps

Commentor County 55

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Wilbur

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Bravo, DNR. This is a big step in the right direction. I fished the Ohio River on Monday, August 9. I drove six hours in one day to be able to do this, and I was rewarded with a 54 pound blue catfish. But that's my personal best -- I fish the Ohio often and wish there more big catfish to be found there. This proposal will help ensure that more of those giant cats will remain swimming in the river. I invest a lot of time and money into catfishing (doubtlessly comparable to what an average bass fisherperson spends), and I am not alone. Rules like this one will ensure that our favorite fish are protected, just as bass, walleyes, stripers, muskies, etc are. Thanks for proposing this.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Marty Hensley

Commentor County 82

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Evansville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I understand the smaller size limits but why not allow 2 or 3 of the larger catfish to be caught.

Thanks,

Marty Hensley
Time stamp

Commentor Name jim fifer
Commentor County 65
Commentor State IN
Commentor City griffin
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment The new proposed 15 inch size limit is absurd, for the hand line anglers!

75 percent of the fish we catch would have to be thrown back these fish are usually injured, and will die anyway. Going to 12 inches like ill. regulations wouldnt be so bad. The rules we go by today are working great. Government beaurecrats should leave working regulations alone, and take care of other more serious problems than messing with fishing laws. Jim Fifer reg. voter

Time stamp

Commentor Name Randy Seger
Commentor County 19
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Jasper
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I totally disagree with changing the minimum limit from 10" to 15" on catfish.

One huge reason to fish for catfish is to eat great tasting fiddlers. If anything, place a limit on the number of 10" to keep, but do not raise the minimum limit.

Thanks, Randy

Time stamp

Commentor Name Travis Wolford
Commentor County 80
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Kempton
Commentor Organization none
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I dont believe the same rules should apply to recreational anglers as do to commercial fishermen. I think some of the rules should not apply to recreational fishermen; such as only one big fish per day. I say if you have the ability to catch multiple 20+ lb flat heads and you want to eat them, you should be able to.

Time stamp

Commentor Name John Behling
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State FL
Commentor City Cape Coral
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment SECTION 5. 312 IAC 9-3-4 ,4(a) should be clarified:

(4) A youth who hunts a deer under this subsection must be accompanied by an adult of at least eighteen (18) years of age who:

(A) does not possess a firearm, bow and arrow, or crossbow while in the field; EXCEPT THAT SUCH ADULT MAY POSSESS A HANDGUN LEGALLY PERMITTED BY A RECOGNIZED HANDGUN/CONCEALED WEAPON PERMIT.

Also, I would recommend against shortening the seasons. It would be better to reduce the bag limit, if needed, but leave the seasons long enough to enable more people to participate. The whole state's hunters can't take the same week off of work to go deer hunting. Longer seasons also improve the experience by not cramming everyone into the woods at the same time.

Time stamp

Commentor Name William J Avery

Commentor County 55

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Camby

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment A very long needed rule change.

It is wise to recognize that there is much more economic value potential in preserving trophy cat fish for the individual cat fisherman fishing for leisure rather than continue allowing commercial fishing and tournament cat fishing to take or mortally injure all the trophy catfish that they can carry for pay pond use or a money prize.

Happy for this, the next step- a reasonable bag limit, and an end to commercial catfishing will round it out nicely.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Jason E. Lynam

Commentor County 15

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Lawrenceburg

Commentor Organization Whiskey city catfish club

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment The commercial fishing on the ohio river has gotten way out of hand. threw the beginning of the warmer months of the year, especially during spawning season, there are commercial fishermen running the waters everyday taking out large amounts of the bigger and older fish. It takes years for a blue catfish to get to a descent size, (15 to 20 pounds), and the commercial fishermen are taking out hundreds per day. i have personally talked to the commercial fishermen at Tanners creek ramp and they have told me that they get anywhere from 2500 to 5000 pounds and sometimes more each day out of there nets. It has made a huge impact on the fishery down here in just the past 3 years. we pay for our liscence to go out and enjoy something we love to do but soon if something isnt done will not be worth the time and energy to put on the rivers. us catfishermen have a huge respect for the fish we catch and don't understand how the state has let this go on for so long. they have no season or limits on the numbers of fish they are taking out of the river and have expressed numerous times that they don't care by there action along with conversation we have had with them on a site called catfish1. They have been taking many of these fish and sold them to overstocked paylakes in ohio where they live for a short time until they die of starvation or stress from being pulled out of a giant river and thrown into a 2 acre pond full of hundreds of fish over 20, 30, 40, all the way up to 80 pounds. If you could take the time of looking up catfish lake paradise 2, located in ohio, they have video of 15 or 20 fish over 40 pounds and up to 74 pounds being released into the lake.

I have proof of the damage that has been done in the past 3 years threw the statistics of a big catfish tournament in rising sun Indiana held by Ohio River Valley Cats which has hosted around and over 100 boats in each tournament that keep the records of the amount of weight caught each year. between last september and this september tournament there was over 2000 pounds difference of fish caught. that may not seem like a lot but if you narrow it down to weight per boat, keep in mind it is a 2 day tournament, thats a lot.

a slot limit is the best way that i can think to limit the amount of fish taken out of OUR river, 2 fish over 36 inches for blue catfish, same for flathead catfish and 2 over 26 inches for channels has worked great for many other lakes and rivers around the country that i have checked upon. Wheeler Lake in Alabama is a prime example, they have always had a nice fishery there until the commercial fishermen showed up, people in the state, Jason Bridges from Decatur AL, got a few people to stand up for the cause and they had the limit approved. Now they have an unbelievable fishery thats harvest monster blue catfish and flatheads and with no doubt will soon have the state record caught if not a world record.

I hope this is taken very serious for the number of catfishermen grows each year and if something is not done soon im afraid that my daughter and others children will not be able to enjoy the one thing that i have enjoyed my whole life. thank you and please take this very serious.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Brian Whitlow

Commentor County 22

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Georgetown

Commentor Organization U.S.C.A.

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I approve these changes. It will make the fishing in the Ohio River a lot better.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Shane M Coomes

Commentor County 55

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Mooresville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment A rule such as this would be a great start to preserving a lot of breeder fish to insure fishermen now and fishermen of the future a great experience of the sport of catfishing.

As a die-hard catfisherman I am bothered by the huge decline of certain areas of our state that has been raided by poachers and commercial catfisherman that get obsessed with greed to take the largest fish out of our local rivers and lakes just to make a profit by selling them to paylake and such.

By simply putting bag limits or size limits you will insure the population of the species (flatheads, Blues and channels) for us and the future of the sport.

Thank you

Time stamp

Commentor Name Winston Bush

Commentor County 29

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Sheridan

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment This is a long overdue and welcome improvement to the regulations. However, any rule, no matter how necessary, is worthless without enforcement so I urge you to make the enforcement of this a priority so that the message gets out that you mean business. Please do not consider this a done deal. Monitor the situation and do what is necessary to further protect catfish in the future.

Also, the Ohio River is being systematically plundered for trophy fish to supply the pay lake trade. Many of these netters work under the shelter of Kentucky regulations. PLEASE do what you can to work with KY and try come up with some proper rules to regulate both commercial fishing and the pay lakes. Thank you...W

Time stamp

Commentor Name Scott Wilson

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State KY

Commentor City Falmouth

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I support the catfish amendments to preserve trophy catfish in the Ohio River.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Barry Johnson

Commentor County 84

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Terre Haute

Commentor Organization United States Catfish Association

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I fully support the proposed catfish amendments. I myself am a avid catfisher on the middle Wabash, and practice catch & release. I have noticed the decline of big blues and flatheads. I believe these amendments are a good place to start to help increase the numbers of trophy size, brood stock catfish. Personally, I think commercial catfishing on public/state waters should be banned altogether, and slot limits for sportfishermen should be imposed.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Jason VanPatten
Commentor County 14
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Washington
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment The changes to the catfish possession limits and so forth are a much needed change and finally taking a step in the right direction on preserving catfish and their future. What is sorely needed in addition to these amendments is that hoop nets need to be outlawed in the White and Wabash Rivers. There are people using them everywhere. The nets are not tagged, people using far more nets than allowed etc. They are catching the coveted flathead in large numbers that prohibit future populations with these nets. Also you need to create new bag limits for catfish in rivers and streams (maybe not including the Ohio). A 5-10 bag limit of assorted catfish needs to be instituted. PLEASE consider these suggestions as well. I fish the east and west forks of the White river and do most of my fishing near my river cabin on the main fork near Hazleton/Decker.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Charles Auten
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State FL
Commentor City Brooksville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Looks like it will be time to retire the rods and reels. Sure won't invest in new equipment to fish Indiana. Your proposed changes are just like the lead ban proposals. They suck and it is about time that the citizens of Indiana do not support the DNR.

Time stamp

Commentor Name James Noles
Commentor County 22
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Lanesville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment This amendment has been a long time coming. We need to protect these resources that we have in our rivers. Commercial fishing with no rules has hurt our Trophy catfishing. Hope the DNR enforces the rules when it becomes law.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Greg Schripps
Commentor County 55
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Martinsville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I don't oppose tournament fishing, but I do think it's unrealistic to suppose that 5 or 6 big cats could be kept all day and then released unharmed. They might be alive when released, but I think it's likely they die a day or two later. This rule change will force changes in tournaments, but I think those changes could be made without damaging tournaments. (Other states have already altered their tournament rules.) I do know studies have been done on other species of fish regarding tournament mortality, and all the studies I've seen show a decent amount of delayed mortality.

In regards to commercial fishing, I hope this proposed rule change slows the take of large cats. It's time to give recreational catfishermen and women a larger piece of the resource pie. Let's start, as a state, to treat catfish like every other gamefish -- bass, walleye, muskies -- and we'll be happy.

Time stamp

Commentor Name jade owen
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State AL
Commentor City cheshire
Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment stop this please stop killing them please leave them alone they should atleast have the right to live!!!!

Time stamp

Commentor Name Paul L, Pierce

Commentor County 18

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Farmland

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I strongly recommend adoption of the proposed rules regarding catfish. In addition, I strongly recommend that the bag limit for catfish in rivers and streams be changed from unlimited to ten (10), as is the limit in lakes and reservoirs. I think this would not only eliminate confusion as to where a limit exists but would also help protect the dwindling population of catfish in rivers and streams.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Roy Buchanan

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State TX

Commentor City Austin

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Please don't allow this cruel practice of penning. I'm not in support of this rule change. It is very inhumane.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Tim Schwipps

Commentor County 69

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Milan

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment This is a very encouraging rule change to finally look at catfish in equal light as other sportfish. I am in full support of this rule change and think it will greatly benefit the health of the catfish population throughout the state.

Time stamp

Commentor Name Mark J Crumpacker

Commentor County 67

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Cloverdale

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I would ask about rules for bag limits in regards to trot lining and limb lining. I typically like to take Channel cats in the 5lb or less size range. I also set trot lines and limb lines. In these cases, it is not always possible to sort the size of fish taken. Specifically trot lining, the current rule states that trot lines must be checked every 24 hours. I like to set at dusk and check next morning-well within the current rules. There are times I will have 20 fish on the line. I may have several that died as a result. If there are more than 1 Channel longer than the proposed rule that have died as a result of struggle, the proposed rule would suggest I commit wanton waste unless I face fines. Maybe hand line possession rule change would work better. Maybe a trot/limb line license would be a better solution. I understand and agree with the need for regulation of taking of our natural game. I would just ask that rules be put in place that would limit the possibility that following the proposed rule not put the angler in jeopardy of infraction due to no fault of their own or commit wanton waste in order to avoid infraction.

Time stamp

Commentor Name David Osborne

Commentor County 69

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Holton

Commentor Organization**Commentor Email** [Email Commentor](#)**Comment** If you do not do something about silver carp in the rivers, none of this will mater.**Time stamp****Commentor Name** Walter Moore**Commentor County** 11**Commentor State** IN**Commentor City** Brazil**Commentor Organization****Commentor Email** [Email Commentor](#)**Comment** I believe the increase in size for streams and lakes (except the Ohio) from 10" to 15" would not accomplish much. Make it 12" or leave it at 10" and you still have a fiddler size for eating. I agree with the limitations on the larger catfish as they are the ones that produce young.**Time stamp** 01/04/2011 02:54:45 PM**Commentor Name** Anthony Hofmann**Commentor County** 67**Commentor State** IN**Commentor City** Cloverdale**Commentor Organization****Commentor Email** [Email Commentor](#)**Comment** I support any change in fishing regulations that will help to conserve Indiana's fish populations and to help conserve natural genetics (larger breeding stock). I'm angler that enjoyed good fishing back in the 70's to mid 80's. I stopped fishing in the mid 80's and recently (2008) picked it back up. I am very much disappointed at the quality of fishing in Indiana's lakes. There seems to be no sizable black bass walleye, bluegill and other native species in any of our public lakes. Our larger rivers still hold some nice fish and the catfish still are thriving, but not for long if we don't take action. Now that the lakes are fished out, people are moving to the rivers and the over-harvest has begun. Please implement these new limits so the generations to come will have a chance to enjoy catching a fish on rod and reel that is greater than 12 inches long!

Thank you for initiating this proposal,

Tony Hofmann

Time stamp 01/09/2011 11:54:48 PM**Commentor Name** Josh Sargent**Commentor County** 89**Commentor State** IN**Commentor City** Richmond**Commentor Organization****Commentor Email** [Email Commentor](#)**Comment** I'm in 100% favor and agreement with this proposed rule change.**Time stamp** 01/13/2011 04:58:10 AM**Commentor Name** Mike Fleshood**Commentor County** 85**Commentor State** IN**Commentor City** Wabash**Commentor Organization****Commentor Email** [Email Commentor](#)**Comment** I like that steps are being taken to protect Indiana's catfish population. But feel the proposal is not enough. A 5 a day limit is more than enough and a slot limit being used for all catfish. For example only fish between say 14 and 24 inches can be taken, nothing under or over. I think Indiana should have slot limits for all gamefish as it has proved effective in other states to improve the quality of fish in the state. -Thank you**Time stamp** 01/15/2011 06:06:26 AM**Commentor Name** James Jackson

Commentor County 85
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Wabash
Commentor Organization Self
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I think this a rule that should have been done years ago. I am glad someone is taking notice and suggesting appropriate changes. I am for the proposed rule change.

Time stamp 01/18/2011 04:12:53 PM

Commentor Name james Fox
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State OH
Commentor City McArthur
Commentor Organization ohio hills catfish club
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment It is a start ,I think these rules are well contstructed,and will help our fishery,

Time stamp 01/21/2011 10:15:39 AM

Commentor Name Mark Blauvelt
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State OH
Commentor City New lebanon
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment as someone who regularly fishes the eastern half of the Ohio River in Indiana for catfish (blues, flaheads and channels as well as fishing dozens of catfish tournaments yearly, I can attest the fishery is collapsing due to extreem fishing pressure, and the ever increasing amount of commercial netters along the river, (KY netters are extremely harmful) but any regulations that would protect trophies, slot limits around healthy spawning fish, or better yet protecting spawn times would all help this valuable fishery. The out of staters coming to Indiana to fish is staggering, a little research would show the numbers do not lie and if this fishery is to provide years and years of quality results, then a proactive regulation approach is in line, My hats off to you guys!!

Mark Blauvelt

Time stamp 01/26/2011 04:10:16 PM

Commentor Name Gaylen Pickard
Commentor County 84
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Terre haute
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Being 66 years old and fishing and fishing since I was 5 years old I can say that I have never seen so many catfish in the White River and the Wabash River. I probably fish more than anyone who has commented on this subject. The 10 to 15 inch size is so abundant that fishing with more than one pole is not needed. I do feel however that overfishing of the large catfish is a concern and should be limited as proposed. Please reconsider the proposed size change from 10 to 15 inches or possibly change the 10 inch to 12 inch size. Thanks, and if you need any further information from me call me at 812-299-9125

Time stamp 02/03/2011 12:14:18 PM

Commentor Name Scott Cress
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State KY
Commentor City Covington
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I fully support the new proposed rules on slot/bag limits on catfish taken out of the Ohio River. This would be a tremendous step at conserving a resource that MANY appreciate and love. Overharvest by commercial fisherman has occured for too long. It's time to enact sensibility.

Thank You - and please press on your KY brothers in arms to do the same. Concerns from us anglers are falling on deaf ears!

Scott Cress

Time stamp 02/04/2011 05:12:04 PM

Commentor Name Eric Radez

Commentor County 49

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Indianapolis

Commentor Organization Untied States Catfish Association

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I completely support this badly needed rule change. Large catfish should be left in their native waters. The only reason they are removed is to be sold to a pay lake (very bad) or to be eaten by someone who is stupid enough to know that large catfish taste terrible. They should be left to breed, and to maintain their vital role in the food chain.

Time stamp 02/06/2011 07:52:28 AM

Commentor Name David Lindauer

Commentor County 65

Commentor State IN

Commentor City New Harmony

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment By changing the size limit to 15" it will remove more of the females with eggs for reproduction, thusly decine the fish numbers. I net fish for the family to eat fiddlers and the wabash river fiddlers 10" to 14" are the best for eating, We now trow back the 15" and above because they are stronger fishy tasting, and putting back 15" and above females always insures the fish will be there. If the limit has to be dropped change it to 12" but not 15" . The larger the fish the worst eating it is and the more mercury units, The worst the fish taste, the less fish will be eaten, the less number of license sold. Please leave the 10" limit on the wabash river ,as to benefit all the people who use it . i have never heard any one complain about number of catish being low in the river.

Time stamp 02/07/2011 12:07:31 PM

Commentor Name Josh Cottrell

Commentor County 73

Commentor State KY

Commentor City Shelbyville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I am a commercial fisherman on the ohio river in the area of Westport, KY. This is my livelihood. I catch catfish to sell. From the reports I have read from KY, commercial fisherman only catch 2% of the total catch off of the river every year. These proposed rules would devastate me and my family. I am currently organizing other commercial fisherman that will be affected by this terrible rule. We will be making our voices heard in this process.

Time stamp 02/08/2011 11:46:46 PM

Commentor Name Randy Merta

Commentor County 87

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Chandler

Commentor Organization commercial fisherman

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment if you look at Indianas deer harvest and you will see that it increases each and every year. Add in all of the car-deer accidents, poaching and farmers killing deer and you will see a whopping large number. Upon looking at the deer harvest you would believe that there is no way this can continue but it does and the harvest gets larger and larger each year. There is more talk of taking more deer in the up coming seasons.

This harvest is based on biology and science.

The proposed new size limit on catfish is based on 'the squeaky wheel gets the grease' There is no science behind this decision.

Commercial fisherman are the eyes and ears of our rivers. Our fishing reports show the fishing is great and has been for years. We are the only group that is out on the river each and everyday. We remove millions of pounds of invasive fish [silver,bighead] each year and no other group can say that.

I would like equal rights for the commercial fisherman in this proposal/rule change.

Make the decision based on biology/science and not for some few people yelling for change.

You made the rules and I have followed them. Keep them the way they were.

Randy Merta

Time stamp 02/14/2011 02:24:36 PM

Commentor Name Jason Prescott

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State KY

Commentor City Cadiz

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I commend your attempts at making Indiana a better fishery .I like the idea of only one "trophy" fish to be taken daily.Catfishing is fast becoming a sport fish with many anglers trying to help preserve the resources.I think this will pay huge dividends for the state through more out of state fishing licenses being sold.

Time stamp 02/14/2011 03:03:09 PM

Commentor Name John Austin

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State KY

Commentor City Flatwoods

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I live in KY but mainly fish the Ohio River. The Catfish need to have limits on them in a bad way. Around here, between the commercial guys and the pay pond people taking them the population has taken a big hit. I've been fishing for many years on the Ohio river and I can tell the size and number of my catches has shrunk dramatically.

Hopefully if other surrounding states take action then KY will do something and try to help protect & conserve our Catfish.

Time stamp 02/16/2011 09:58:54 AM

Commentor Name Winston Bush

Commentor County 29

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Sheridan

Commentor Organization United states Catfish Association

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment This is a much needed ammendment.

Catfishing is on the brink of becoming very popular, especially tournaments. If steps are taken now to ensure that populations can be sustained or better still improved Indiana can benefit greatly from the dollars that will be spent by recreational and tournament anglers alike in this fast growing sector of fishing. Of course, as the Ohio River a shared border, the state of Kentucky will need to be on board as well. Now is the time, I hope this ammendment gets passed. It is a small step but a much needed one

Thank you...W

Time stamp 02/16/2011 10:41:26 AM

Commentor Name Ricky Eiselt

Commentor County 39

Commentor State KY

Commentor City louisville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I would love to see laws to protect the big catfish and the number of smaller fish. These guys who take the fish, target the big fish. They sell the fish to paylakes and anyone else. I just started fishing the river last year, but my buddy who got me into it .All he talks about is how much easier it used to be to catch a big fish. We need to do some thing now or soon it will be to late. Thanks Ricky

Time stamp 02/16/2011 02:34:01 PM

Commentor Name Gary Montgomery
Commentor County 41
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Greenwood
Commentor Organization United States Catfish Association Member
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment This is a worthy cause to preserve our natural resources for future generations. However, it is us, the people, who have the biggest impact. People aren't aware unless they know what the problem is. Spread the word to other fishermen about these issues cause they are as concerned as you are about healthy lakes, rivers and streams. Safe fishing and boating to you all!

Time stamp 02/16/2011 04:48:54 PM

Commentor Name John Pike
Commentor County 32
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Plainfield
Commentor Organization Duke Energy
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Under Section 1 IAC 9-7-3, subsection (c) includes Duke Energy's Gibson Lake with an unlimited bag limit for channel catfish.

Duke Energy's Gibson Lake should be removed from this listing in subsection (c) as it is closed to all fishing since 2007.

Time stamp 02/17/2011 06:47:34 AM

Commentor Name jason vanpatten
Commentor County 14
Commentor State IN
Commentor City washington
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment We need a major overhaul in catfishing regulations in Indiana in order to protect the species and provide more opportunities to catch larger fish. Here is what I want to see: No hoop net fishing on any river except the Ohio, a limit of 5-10 catfish on lakes and streams daily, a size limit as in only one fish over 30(?) inches daily. I want to see more enforcement on the main stem of the White River.

The hoop net fishers are not using tags and are putting out way more than the max allowed. This is happening on the White river around the Decker/Hazleton area.

Would like to see the state spend some \$ on buying river property and turn it into public access instead of spending all their money on lakes and forests.

I have been fishing these areas over 25 years and know firsthand the harm being done down here. Please help.

Time stamp 02/18/2011 04:56:21 AM

Commentor Name andrew c patterson
Commentor County 67
Commentor State IN
Commentor City coatesville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment There seems to be a serious conflict between recreational fishermen and commercial fishermen due to the lack of guidelines directed towards commercial harvest. Most of the recreational fishermen I have listened to want commercial fishing banned, period. I have voiced my opinion to them that in the long haul it could be dangerous to the overall health of the river, with the promotion of catch and release of catfish, and the banning of commercial harvest, this could, as i said, be dangerous in the long run.

In my opinion the best and only way to know for sure would be to impose laws governing size and bag limits directed at the commercial fishing in all rivers and lakes of the state, much like the laws that are directed towards recreational fishermen. Another thing one has to bring to the table, is how the rule changes are going to be enforced, I have seen first hand many nets, trot lines, jugs and limb lines that were not tagged at all, and all illegal with nothing being done to prevent it. (run the wabash a few times in the summer, you'll see what I mean)

regulation and enforcement are the two key items that need to change now.

Andy Patterson...aka...Afishpatrol

Time stamp 02/18/2011 05:24:39 PM

Commentor Name Jeff Schmeltz

Commentor County 61

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Bloomingdale

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I think that rule would be great. In my opinion people shouldnt be aloud to keep big catfish and especially comercial fisherman. I believe that netting all together should be illegal and make these comercial fisherman raise catfish in farm ponds to sell rather than thinning out the catfish populations in all the major river systems. Even if this law gets passed whos going to patrol the rivers to make sure that the comercial fisherman are actually throwing back fish over the limit or just putting them back in their net for the next day. I fished over 500 hours last year alone and I only saw a conservation officer one time on the wabash river between clinton and lafayette. Im just saying make the law and enforce it.

Time stamp 02/19/2011 06:48:03 AM

Commentor Name Timothy E Bischoff

Commentor County 30

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Greenfield

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I feel that these changes in the catfish regulations are fundamental to ensure the sport fisheries we are seeing other states enjoy with trophy catfish such as Santee Cooper in South Carolina, James River in Virginia, and the Potomac in Washington DC where anglers are coming from all over to enjoy thier waters and spend money. Comercial fishing has been decimating the numbers for too long without limits imposed upon them for personal profit where with an outstanding trophy catfishery the monetary benefits would be spread to many more throughout the state from DNR to Tourism to Hotels to Restuarants to Bait/Tackle shops and so forth. Excellent proposals please do not succumb to lobbying and pressure from the commercial fishing sector in doing what is right to ensure the outdoors for generations to come.

Time stamp 02/21/2011 12:24:05 PM

Commentor Name Tim Bannister

Commentor County 55

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Martinsville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Working a Slot has work in many areas of the country for the fisheries

There is one main concern that really needs to be addressed. That is the white carp invasion, They a safety and fisheries problem, we all know this.

When are you going to become more active in it's control. They are eating what all the new spawn will need to survive. I fish the Walbash often and where they are there is no game fish or catfish.

Thank you

Tim Bannister

Time stamp 02/22/2011 07:22:57 AM

Commentor Name Jeff Armstrong

Commentor County 37

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Wheatfield

Commentor Organization www.IndianaNature.com

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I would be happy with a slot limit on catfish. Even if you just try it on one river system. Small cats aren't big enough to keep, so 15 inches works for me. But the bigger ones aren't that great for eating, so keeping them is pointless. Something like only being able to keep fish 15-25 inches would be something worth trying on a system to see how things work.

Time stamp 02/22/2011 08:05:06 AM

Commentor Name Charles A. Luck
Commentor County 18
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Muncie
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I would like to see this pass, although I would like to see even more strict regulations. Like making the bag limit in rivers the same as in lakes, except for commercial fishermen. Also would like to see those lengths limits lowered on the one fish a day. Have a good day, Chuck.

Time stamp 02/22/2011 08:44:13 AM

Commentor Name David Lee Hurst
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State IN
Commentor City boonville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment 15' Rule on channel cats is nuts it is going way to far, fiddler fishing will be history. change the large catfish daily limit to two fish over 35" in each type of catfish.

Time stamp 02/24/2011 06:25:35 AM

Commentor Name Thomas C Roach
Commentor County 28
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Bloomfield
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment FINALLY! I have been a catfisherman all my life, and it's about DAMN TIME!! I get so sick of seeing photos of "sportsmen" holding stringers of large cats (Flatheads mostly) most of which are probably older then the so called "sportsman" who caught them. GOOD JOB Indiana DNR of protecting these old and valuable fish. I support this 200%, I have no problem with folks wanting to keep a "mess" of smaller fish, I do that myself from time to time, but we NEED to protect the larger cats....Again GOOD JOB!!

Thomas Roach

Time stamp 02/24/2011 12:37:59 PM

Commentor Name Karen Huss
Commentor County 60
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Spencer
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I didn't realize so many people are catfishing!

Can you please provide details and study data that support this statement: These proposed changes are in response to public concerns regarding increasing harvest pressure on catfish, recently completed catfish research in the Wabash River, and ongoing, cooperative fish management discussions with other Ohio River states.

Time stamp 02/24/2011 01:42:51 PM

Commentor Name Nathan Wyse
Commentor County 20
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Middlebury
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I agree with est. size and catch limits on catfish. It only makes sense to help and protect the fish from greedy people who have taken advantage of no limits! Thanks

Time stamp 02/24/2011 01:52:37 PM

Commentor Name Tim Hirsch

Commentor County 25

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Kewanna

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment The rule sounds good. I think you need to look at the overwhelming otter population also for the catfish depletion. Catfish are slow and just sit and wait to be eaten. Lets start trapping some otters and watch the numbers rise.

Time stamp 02/24/2011 01:57:16 PM

Commentor Name GREG ASBROCK

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State OH

Commentor City CARLISLE

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Hello, yes I agree with the proposed regulations concerning size for catfish. Even though I live in Ohio I get Indiana fishing licenses each and every year. I think size limits should be imposed for species as the DNR sees fit. Last year, in Ohio, our crappie size limit was/is now 9 inches. Personally, I was glad to see that. I had seen people catching and keeping crappie that were 5-6 inches long. Not enough meat to feed a bird. Let's respect what we have. Thank you.

Time stamp 02/24/2011 02:29:06 PM

Commentor Name Brad Hannah

Commentor County 42

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Vincennes

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Too little too Late also If Illinois does not participate it will not help any down here. The Flat head fishing has been horrible in the pool 10 miles up/down from Vincennes I cannot speak for the rest, and channel catfish sizes continue to decline. When you have as much commercial fishing going on as we do around here and rarely any enforcement on the commercial side. Most of the pressure comes from St Fransiville Ill, and Russellville Ill.

We need to eliminate all commercial fishing in the Wabash and then address the erosion /water quality.

If you look at the fishing guidelines for consumption I would not think that we would want a product on the market commercially that people have no Idea of what kind of contaminants that are being sold to them

But this is just my opinion/experience

PS also we in Knox county are very neglected when it comes to fishing / Hunting opportunities so it would really be nice to do away with the nets in this section of river

Also the dam/overflow at the F&W area called White Oaks is failing any chance of repairs???

Thank You

Time stamp 02/24/2011 02:35:51 PM

Commentor Name Larry Kip Clark

Commentor County 11

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Centerpoint

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I strongly agree with restrictions on catfish. I often fish Indiana's rivers, lakes and streams and have seen a decrease in catfish numbers in rescent years.

Time stamp 02/24/2011 03:03:09 PM

Commentor Name glenn salyer

Commentor County 52
Commentor State IN
Commentor City peru
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment not sure how much personell comments are taken into consideration but it's getting to the point that i want to stop wasting money on hunting and fishing license. if i understand the proposed rule that you'd be allowed a very small limit on fish or size i could understand going from 10 inches to 12 but to jump to 15 inches so how will this effect the rule on having a trout line i gues it would make them obsolete prices of license have gone up and for what to get less with more changes and rules i especially hate the proposed deer hunting change of haveing to check a doe before a buck. i would allmost rather but and out of state license and hunt a different state thanks for letting me vent

Time stamp 02/24/2011 03:29:01 PM

Commentor Name Darrell French
Commentor County 55
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Morgantown
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I am in support of the proposed rule change.

Time stamp 02/24/2011 04:25:37 PM

Commentor Name Sheldon Karnes
Commentor County 10
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Jeffersonville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)
Comment All of the changes to rules on catfish sound great. Sheldon

Time stamp 02/24/2011 07:31:20 PM

Commentor Name Richard Arnold
Commentor County 82
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Evansville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)
Comment I'm all for the proposed changes in catfish regulations

Time stamp 02/24/2011 07:33:49 PM

Commentor Name Curtis D Miller
Commentor County 79
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Lafayette
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)
Comment I support the rule changes.

Time stamp 02/25/2011 04:01:33 AM

Commentor Name Thomas Gardner
Commentor County 28
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Bloomfield
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)
Comment The rules of the state of Indiana should be clear and understood.

Does the proposed 28 inch rule on catfish apply to only 3 (1 each of the various catfish per day) & 6 per possession limit - or - may all legally caught catfish in my possession be over 28 inches if caught on different days?

Possession limit is twice the daily bag limit. The wording on the proposed rule change should be "Change the daily bag limit to allow only one each of ..."

Does the next day start at midnight for night-time sport fishermen???

Is the daily bag limit per calendar day or per fishing trip if that trip lasts past midnight?

Time stamp 02/25/2011 04:35:37 AM

Commentor Name William Olmstead

Commentor County 76

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Angola

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment This is a much-needed new rule. These fish are becoming extinct. Actually, I believe you should make it all catch-and-release. But this is a good start.

Time stamp 02/25/2011 04:57:38 AM

Commentor Name Jim Jackson

Commentor County 85

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Wabash

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment There is a minor change in the wording that needs to be addressed:

312 IAC 9-8-6 Commercial fishing on the Ohio River Section 6(d) needs to have the word "fish" added to the phrase ... "any of the following taken" ... It should read ... "any of the following fish taken" ...

I am in full support of this proposed rule change. My son and I are avid trotline catfishermen. We already comply with the proposed change simply through our own standard of catch and release along with common sense. It really baffles me at times that others have to have a law modified rather than simply use common sense.

I do realize this change will affect commercial fisherman, but in 5-7 years the fishery should produce better quality fish.

I am not a commercial fisherman, nor do I know the rules and amendments they have to follow. But I don't see anywhere in the rule change that would prohibit the fisherman from selling his or her goods in the surrounding states that may not have the same restrictions as the ones that are proposed here.

My point is if the rules states anyone is only allowed to take or sell only one channel catfish of 28 inches or greater per day. What happens if he catches 20 that are 30 inches and sells them in Kentucky, Ohio or Illinois where they may not have to same 1 @ 28 inches per day rule? Shouldn't there be some rule that states if you are a Indiana licensed commercial fisherman that you should be required to sell in Indiana?

The same rules should apply for out of state fisherman who catch fish from their side of the Ohio river and try to sell in Indiana even if they are licensed from another state, where is this at?

Hopefully there is some form of reciprocity that exists between Ohio, Kentucky and Illinois to help enforce Indiana laws and the same for Indiana towards the other states. If not, then basically the proposed rule changes are meaningless on the Ohio river.

I think there are some loop holes in the proposed changes that need to be reviewed before passing anything. These are the questions I have.

Thank-you for your time and keep up the good work!

Respectfully,
Jim Jackson

765-981-2872

Time stamp 02/25/2011 05:15:53 AM

Commentor Name George Litherland

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Jasper

Commentor Organization Quail & Ducks Unlimited Member

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I grew up on the Ohio River at Cannelton. I remember fishing off Rock Island just above the current Locks and Dam which put the Island underwater. I remember seeing hundreds if not thousands of paddle fish bobbing in and out of the water with their long noses as they swan up stream around the island. It was a beautiful site.

Over the past few years I have notices very large fully equipped john boats fishing in the Ohio. I ask them what they were catching? They said "paddle fish". I ask if they were good to eat. They said "Oh , we don't eat them, we just get their eggs and throw the dead carcass back in the river. I couldn't believe it! The told me their was a lot of money in the eggs as caviar. They must have been making a lot of money as they really had a nice rig. This is barbaric and should be stopped.

Do we have any laws to protect these fish?

Time stamp 02/25/2011 06:07:56 AM

Commentor Name RANDY DORTON

Commentor County 3

Commentor State IN

Commentor City EDINBURGH

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I SUPPORT THIS BILL

Time stamp 02/25/2011 06:07:34 AM

Commentor Name Brad Walter

Commentor County 46

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Hanna

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment These rule changes are a good idea but I would put a possession limit on the 15-28 inch catfish depending on the type of license you hold.

Time stamp 02/25/2011 06:40:55 AM

Commentor Name CG Epple

Commentor County 26

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Haubstadt

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I am not opposed to increasing the size limit for catfish, but I feel that it should be changed to 12", not 15". The 15" minimum would eliminate fiddler size catfish which are the best eating.

I also feel restricting the limit to one(1) of each species is low. I would agree to a limit of two(2) per species.

Thank you

CG Epple

Time stamp 02/25/2011 07:22:50 AM

Commentor Name Thomas C Roach

Commentor County 28

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Bloomfield

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I agreed before the correction and I still agree, I think 35" (Flatheads and Blues) is probably better for the "meat" fisherman out there. I would like to see a limit of say, 5 catfish over 20" PLUS the rule of only one channel over 28 and one blue/ flattie over 35", but Rome wasn't built in a day, and I think it is GREAT that the DNR is FINALLY doing something to protect these fish. Thank you and keep up the good work.

Thomas Roach

Time stamp 02/25/2011 07:27:16 AM

Commentor Name David F. Delaney

Commentor County 49

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Indianapolis

Commentor Organization None

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I fully support these proposed changes to the catfish rules. There is strong pressure on many of the smaller streams and rivers in regard to folks keeping small catfish. I believe these proposed changes will help secure the resource for the future and still provide a lot of recreational opportunity for Indiana citizens.

Time stamp 02/25/2011 07:43:49 AM

Commentor Name Daniel S. Cain

Commentor County 55

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Martinsville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I wish you would limit the catfish size to 12 inches instead of 10 inches. That would e a compromise.

Time stamp 02/25/2011 07:57:06 AM

Commentor Name Clyde Handshoe

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Waterloo

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I strongly support these changes. I, personally, have seen many anglers concentrating on the taking of catfish in recent years.

At the rate I've seen, it would deplete the stock in Indiana waters.

Please enact this one.

Thanks.

Clyde

Time stamp 02/25/2011 09:08:09 AM

Commentor Name DAVID A. STUCKEY

Commentor County 82

Commentor State IN

Commentor City EVANSVILLE

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment THE PROPOSED RULE SEEMS OVERLY CONSERVATIVE TO ADJUST THE DAILY BAG LIMIT FROM UNLIMITED TO ONLY ONE FISH PER DAY.

Time stamp 02/25/2011 09:18:33 AM

Commentor Name Clayton Wright

Commentor County 27

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Gas City

Commentor Organization N/A

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I feel that increasing the minimum size limit on catfish is a mistake. The catfish between 10" to 15" are what is recognized as the "eater size" and the larger catfish are the spawning fish. If people are not allowed to take fish that are more so the eater size then you will see more and more people taking fish that are from 15 to 25 inches which is in many places the majority of sexually mature fish. I could understand increasing this size limit for the commercial fisherman because they take every legal fish they catch regardless of size.

I do however strongly recommend the other part of this proposal which limits individuals to only one large catfish of each species. I think it will create two positives. First it will greatly help out this resource as well as could help the state of Indiana earn revenue from people traveling to fish here. Just like people travel to the east coast to catch large blue catfish, to Tennessee to catch crappie, or travel to the great lakes to catch trout and smallmouth bass, if you create a quality fishery then people will travel to it and bring there dollars with them.

Time stamp 02/25/2011 09:36:54 AM

Commentor Name Gordon Cochran

Commentor County 91

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Monticello

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment By doing this you are saying that when I run my troutline I have to turn to large of fish bak!!! dont think so!!!This defeats the purpose of running a troutline

Time stamp 02/25/2011 09:38:16 AM

Commentor Name Stanley Geidel

Commentor County 18

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Muncie

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I strongly support all efforts to limit the number of large catfish that can be taken by both sport and commercial fishing license holders. Thank you for proposing this change and acting in support of catch-and-release fishing for trophy catfish. Sincerely, Stanley Geidel, Muncie, IN

Time stamp 02/25/2011 09:53:50 AM

Commentor Name Donald Koch

Commentor County 65

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Poseyville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I agree with the size change for catfish. Anything to improve our Indiana fisheries. I hope Illinois will agree to go along with the change.

Don Koch

Time stamp 02/25/2011 10:03:40 AM

Commentor Name tim ryker

Commentor County 69

Commentor State IN

Commentor City batesville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment If you are talking about statewide changes to catfish length keepiing (28"+) I think you need to narrow it down to the areas you specifically want to cover. All areas do not need thatt much protection. Brookville lake, Monroe ladke, and the Whitewater river areas have plenty of big catfish and they aren't harvested to a big extent. Most people release them, but some eat 'em and they are still very abundant there.

Time stamp 02/25/2011 10:54:26 AM

Commentor Name John Burgoon

Commentor County 53

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Bloomington

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Quote: (1) a channel that is 28 inches or more in total length;

This length limit is deeply discouraging to me.

The larger size fish are known to contain far more contaminants (such as PCBs) due to their increased age and consumption of contaminated food. Limiting us to keeping only large fish is the same as telling us to consume the more contaminated fish! I have made a practice of keeping and consuming only a small number of small channel cats in the hopes that this would minimize my exposure to contaminants.

Finally, I suggest at least allowing an exception for children under the age of 12. Is there no way to let a child keep a catfish that she can actually manage to land?

Please re-consider this rule in light of the issues I have mentioned.

Time stamp 02/25/2011 10:51:50 AM

Commentor Name Michael A. Wilson

Commentor County 41

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Franklin

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I've seen lakes and reservoirs where one would be hard pressed to catch any catfish 15 inches, but there are large amounts of catfish smaller than the proposed size limit. In my opinion this will greatly curtail the ability of parents to teach thier children about fishing, and using the fish for the nurishment of the body and not wasting resoruces.

Thanks

Mike Wilson

Time stamp 02/25/2011 01:53:24 PM

Commentor Name J. Eran McCormick

Commentor County 8

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Delphi

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment This rule would change most fish to an unedible size. Totally useless Law.

Time stamp 02/25/2011 01:57:22 PM

Commentor Name curtis adcock

Commentor County 47

Commentor State IN

Commentor City bedford

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment i thank the len is to high i thank 10 inch is long is just right for eating u get any big they get touch

Time stamp 02/26/2011 05:35:27 AM

Commentor Name Clarence H. Williams

Commentor County 87

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Newburgh

Commentor Organization Hunting Indiana

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I do not fish, but I talk to a lot of folks that do.

From my discussions with these fishermen I will support this proposal in it's entirety.

Thank you,

Clarence H. Williams

Time stamp 02/26/2011 06:36:08 AM

Commentor Name Brent Cardinal

Commentor County 62

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Tell City

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment How about stating the reasons for justifying the proposed catfish limits in Indiana. I am a recreational fisherman with a camp on a creek about 500 yards from the Ohio River, and I fish occasionally for catfish to eat. I do not keep anything in the 10" size, but there are some fine eating-size 14" channel catfish that would be illegal under the new 15" minimum size. As far as the proposed bag limits on larger catfish, I never keep anything over 24" anyway due the the muddy taste and the possibility of higher concentrations of heavy metals and chemicals, so the proposed limits on larger fish would only affect trophy and commercial fishermen. Perhaps these limits have been proposed because of fishing pressure in northern and central Indiana lakes and streams? If that is the case, then why not impose restrictions only where they are needed, and spend more time and resources figuring out a SOLUTION TO THE ASIAN CARP PROBLEM! They have become a real safety threat to boaters in our part of the state!

Thanks,

Brent Cardinal

Tell City, IN

Time stamp 02/26/2011 06:59:39 AM

Commentor Name Donald Keith Kleehamer

Commentor County 22

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Sellersburg

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment We should point out any research on growth rates and reproduction rates and exactly how many there are in an area and how many are being harvested; if none has been completed we should do so immediately and just implement some temporary limits such as bag limit, commercial harvesting, and size limits and then once we have all the information discuss bag limits and size limits based on the local environment. I am for it to protect the species and to protect our fisheries. I can tell you as a child my brother and I used to catch a stringer full of pan fish at dean lake and now we can go and fish all day and be lucky to catch half dozen or a dozen; I think it has too much fishing pressure now and we've let the fishery decline a bit in not setting some limits even with pan fish. We have a lot of immigrants that enjoy fishing as well and with immigration and increased population and increased interest in fishing we're loosing some ground on our fisheries.

Time stamp 02/26/2011 10:46:58 AM

Commentor Name Bill fulcher

Commentor County 53

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Bloomington

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I think a 10 inch catfish is too small. I know this from experience. I would like to see the length changed to 15 inches or a length that would guarantee the fish had at least one season to reproduce. Thank you for the chance to comment, Bill Fulcher

Time stamp 02/26/2011 03:51:01 PM

Commentor Name Brian Campbell

Commentor County 92
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Churubusco, IN
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Can't attend a meeting, but fully support the change. Let's get ahead of overharvest on catfish, the next great sportfish. I would like to see harvest limits on rivers and streams, as well as size limits for lakes.

Time stamp 02/27/2011 04:53:30 AM

Commentor Name Mike Fleshood
Commentor County 85
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Wabash
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I think the limit on the Channel Catfish is good, would like to see a limit of nothing over 35" placed on blue and flathead for non commercial fishing. Most fishermen don't catch more than one blue or flat over 35" a day anyway so that law seems null. A blue or flat 35" long takes 10 years to reach that size. Also let's ban trot lines for non commercial fishing.

Time stamp 02/27/2011 05:13:20 AM

Commentor Name Thomas Gribbins
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State KY
Commentor City Louisville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment First thing first. I am a fishermen of both states Indiana and Kentucky.

I fish in lakes and the Ohio river.

If I read the news paper right today, the Indiana Fish Wild life(DNR) as you call it..

States the new rules of catching cat fish in the Ohio river will have new size limits.

Thats ok, but what I didn't understand is, How Indiana can make a rule over the Ohio River. (From the 2/27/2011 CJ news paper) It does not state anything about a Kentucky Fisherman holding a Kentucky fishing license catching these type of fish. I would hope the new rules make it, but you should make it clear that Indiana can not stop any Fisherman with a up to date Kentucky Fishing License for violating these new rules in the Ohio River...

Thanks and have a safe fishing and boating year

Tom Gribbins

Time stamp 02/27/2011 07:29:41 AM

Commentor Name josh
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State IA
Commentor City madrid
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Trophy catfishing is exploding. The states that become travel destinations will be the first ones to protect trophy catfish.

Time stamp 02/27/2011 07:48:39 AM

Commentor Name David L. Seaton
Commentor County 26
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Owensville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Excellent idea! Should help increase the catfish population by saving the bigger breeding stock. On another subject, Gibson Lake , in Gibson county has been closed to the public for several years now. Fishing is allowed in other nearby lakes, but not the main lake.

Thank you, David Seaton
Time stamp 02/27/2011 09:24:15 AM

Commentor Name Ben Goebel
Commentor County 82
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Evansville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Yes we need this rule passed for better fishing on the Ohio river and for the sport of catfishing to flourish like it has in the Tennessee river system as well as it has in Alabama. If we let the big fish grow it will only get better for everyone just like it has down there not to mention the tourism part in 5 years what the impact that will have to the Ohio river. I personally spend a minimum of a \$ 1000 in Alabama to just to go and catch big fish but not only big fish high quality numbers of catfish and if you pass this proposal it will only be better for the future of catfishing

Time stamp 02/27/2011 04:14:07 PM

Commentor Name Rachel Peace
Commentor County 80
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Sharpsville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment If this means that I can go out fishing on a lake and only keep 1 catfish that measures 28 inches or more, then why would I even bother to go? 28 inches on catfish is a small measurement to begin with and I usually throw them back. I usually catch catfish that run 35 inches and up and usually (if I'm lucky) I get two. I usually get to go catfishing maybe 4 times a year. So if you change this, I may as well not even buy a fishing license.

Time stamp 02/27/2011 04:43:20 PM

Commentor Name James Aaron Wheatley
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State KY
Commentor City Owensboro
Commentor Organization Monsters on the Ohio
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment It is my belief that this rule is a Must to preserve catfishing for the next generation.

Time stamp 02/27/2011 04:53:12 PM

Commentor Name Michael R. Warren, Jr.
Commentor County 6
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Whitestown
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I haven't fished in a couple of years but was hoping to get out a few times on the Tippecanoe River this year. As I recall, I didn't catch many (if any) over 15 inches. In the past I only got out 2 or 3 times and would only catch 10 to 15 over the 10 inch size limit. If you raise the limit to 15, I'd be lucky to take home 1 fish each time out. That's hardly worth keeping since you can't make a meal for 3 to 5 people with 1 or 2 fish. I think 12 inches would be a better size limit. Then maybe I could take home 5 or 6 fish and that would be worth keeping for a meal for 3 to 5 people. Thank you for taking the time to consider my comments.

Time stamp 02/27/2011 07:21:35 PM

Commentor Name Scott Hesse
Commentor County 54
Commentor State TN
Commentor City Clarksville
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I feel that having a size limit on catfish is needed to ensure that the species continues to be available for our enjoyment and the eco system into the future. Catfish is growing in popularity and I feel that regulating the size and limit of catfish taken from public waterways will benefit the population and survivability long into the future. I live in Tennessee and saw first hand what happened when Tennessee limited buck harvesting. The quality and numbers bucks increase within a few years in the area that in hunt. Proposals and laws that are passed in one state are viewed by other surrounding states and often followed. These laws often affect other states as well when waterways are shared such as the Ohio River. Control the future of catfishing by controlling the size and limits such as you do with other species.

Time stamp 02/27/2011 09:56:35 PM

Commentor Name Sam Mercer

Commentor County 31

Commentor State IN

Commentor City elizabeth

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment This is a good rule. It keeps the bigger fish in our fisheries. But i don't know how well it will work if ky, ohio, and illinois don't change their rules to match.

Time stamp 02/28/2011 06:03:15 AM

Commentor Name David E. Hiatt

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State IL

Commentor City Marshall

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment As a sport catfisherman utilizing rod and reel tackle on the Wabash River near Darwin Illinois I would strongly support this proposed rule change. Too many fisherman who utilize nets, bank poles and trotlines have a "keep everything you catch" mentality." In so doing, populations of large sport fish are depleted. This depletion of large fish creates recruitment problems and dilutes the genetic diversity needed to grow large sport fish.

Time stamp 02/28/2011 08:24:33 AM

Commentor Name James Dale Sides

Commentor County 39

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Madison

Commentor Organization NA

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I think this regulation is long over due and am for it 100%, the limits are necessary to protect our resource Ohio river catfish

Time stamp 02/28/2011 10:21:53 AM

Commentor Name Robert E Bieler

Commentor County 1

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Decatur

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment adopt rule

Time stamp 02/28/2011 10:55:46 AM

Commentor Name Terry Pruss

Commentor County 15

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Dillsboro

Commentor Organization none

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I have been fishing the Ohio in southeast Indiana for over 50 years. I have seen it come from almost nothing to a

great fishery, however since the paddle fish caviar came on the scene the bluecat fishing has declined very rapidly. Something needs to be done and very quickly. I don't know if they are killed as by catch or what but since 2007 it has really gone down hill for me to the extent I am going out of state to fish more than at any time in my life. I hope you guys can do something to save the fishery.

Time stamp 02/28/2011 01:09:10 PM

Commentor Name Bobby Byrd

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State KY

Commentor City Frankfort

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I'm all for the "1 Blue or Flathead Catfish over 35inch" idea. But, having an unlimited number of smaller Catfish is just gonna continue to drop their numbers. I see no reason why any one person would require more than 4-5 decent sized Catfish in one day of fishing. If the size of the fish are gonna be regulated, so should the daily limit. Just my 2 cents. Thanks

Time stamp 02/28/2011 01:21:44 PM

Commentor Name Teresa Shelpman

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State OH

Commentor City Otway

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment This admendment is a good proposal that needs to pass. No natural resource can sustain unregulated harvest. Catfish are native to the Ohio River and no native species should be considered as a rough fish and allowed to be harvested unregulated. Sport catfishing is rapidly growing and has many supporters who would like to see them regulated. As an avid fisherman myself I have purchased Indiana fishing liscences in the past and plan to do so in the future for the main purpose of catfishing, and hope to see plenty of catfish left in the rivers for the future of this sport.

Time stamp 02/28/2011 04:06:12 PM

Commentor Name Douglas Petroff

Commentor County 49

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Indianapolis

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment As indicated in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's guidance document entitled "Should I Eat the Fish I Catch? A guide to healthy eating of the fish you catch" (September, 1997), those anglers that choose to eat some of the gamefish they catch should eat smaller, younger fish, since these fish are less likely to contain elevated levels of pollutants than larger, older fish. This is especially true of fatty, bottom feeding fish such as catfish that are more likely to accumulate the persistent contaminants found in many of Indiana's waters, such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides, and heavy metals.

Consequently, by raising the size limit from 10 inches to the proposed limit of 15 inches, anglers such as me that enjoy occasionally keeping a few smaller (i.e., healthier) catfish in the 10 to 13 inch size range for the frying pan will no longer be able to do so. Instead, we will be forced to choose between eating the larger, more contaminated fish or going without.

A daily fish number limit restriction (for example, 5 catfish per day 10 inches in length or larger, with possible additional restrictions on keeping much larger fish) would in my opinion strike a better balance between the health of the catfish population in Indiana and the health of those Hoosier anglers that enjoy catching and eating some of those catfish.

Thank you.

Time stamp 02/28/2011 05:17:39 PM

Commentor Name James Hamilton

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State OH

Commentor City Mount Orab

Commentor Organization**Commentor Email** [Email Commentor](#)

Comment so glad to see something being done for our children to have the opportunity to fish the giants that roam our waters... be it the wabash or the ohio river this needs to be done for the better of catfishing...

Time stamp 02/28/2011 06:35:21 PM**Commentor Name** Greg Yazel**Commentor County** 16**Commentor State** IN**Commentor City** Greensburg**Commentor Organization** ISBA**Commentor Email** [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I approve of the proposed regulations. The larger fish need protection from overfishing on the commercial side.

Time stamp 03/01/2011 11:01:52 AM**Commentor Name** Chad Runge**Commentor County** 93**Commentor State** OK**Commentor City** Edmond**Commentor Organization****Commentor Email** [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I think you are heading in the right direction, though I think the commercial fishing regulations could even be more strict, as this is an outdated practice, and we could support our fish farming industry more, and provide better fishing in turn will bring more tournaments and attractions to your state, which will by far bring in more money than the commercial fishing does. When I talk about commercial fishing I talk about seines and hoop nets, which rape our waters of quality fish.

Overall I am very please with the progress, and look forward to keep honing these rules and regulations to provide excellent catfishing for generations to come.

Time stamp 03/01/2011 12:34:38 PM**Commentor Name** Charles Duff**Commentor County** Out of State**Commentor State** KY**Commentor City** Hebron**Commentor Organization****Commentor Email** [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Great Idea, I'm all for it!!

Time stamp 03/01/2011 03:36:42 PM**Commentor Name** Kristopher Turner**Commentor County** 49**Commentor State** IN**Commentor City** Indianapolis**Commentor Organization****Commentor Email** [Email Commentor](#)

Comment As a resident of Marion County and the Great State of Indiana as well as a member of the United States Catfish Association, I write to support the amendments to the catfish rule that require catfish to be 15 inches in order to be taken. Furthermore, I support further rules that protect catfish and other species from "over harvesting" for commercial interests or otherwise.

As Hoosiers, we should take pride in our natural resources. That includes protecting them from undue stress, harm or overuse. It is imperative that this Commission continue to make rule changes that shield Indiana's natural resources, particularly recreational waters, from negative and harmful practices.

Time stamp 03/01/2011 04:05:26 PM**Commentor Name** William Todd Campbell**Commentor County** 88

Commentor State IN
Commentor City SALEM
Commentor Organization NONE
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)
Comment To the Natural Resources Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Commission regarding the proposed Catfish Amendments.

As an avid fisherman I would like to comment on proposed changes to the daily bag limit on larger catfish, specifically Channel Catfish 28 inches or larger, Blue Catfish 35 inches or larger, and Flathead Catfish 35 inches or larger. My family and I fish for the above species on the Muscatatuck River from its convergence with the East Fork White River upstream to the Waskom Bridge and the East Fork White River from its convergence with the Muscatatuck River upstream to State Road 235. Our primary method for taking these fish are drop or limb lines and bank poles. My family and I fish approximately 40 days a year using these methods. We have been using these methods for at least 3 generations spanning over 60 years in local rivers and lakes, and I am teaching my children what I have learned from my father and grandfather.

In the last 15 years, I have noticed a decline in the number of fishermen using these methods in the waters I frequent. My personal experience and conversations with other fishermen in the area, lead me to believe the quality of catfish, both size and numbers have remained steady or increased.

My family and I utilize these resources for both food and enjoyment of the outdoors. With the pressure on families to put food on the table during these tougher economic times, it is unfair to put such restrictions on family fishermen who are trying to provide food for their family's consumption. Therefore I am opposed the proposed limit on larger catfish.

I do not believe that individuals fishing to put food on the family table are the cause of a decline in number or size of fish. I feel that the decline is a result of industrial and agricultural pollutants, as well as commercial and tournament fishing. I have seen a significant increase in both small and large scale Tournament Fishing for catfish in all public waters I fish. I have personally witnessed the release of live catfish (of all sizes) caught during a tournament only to find them dead a few hours later at the release site. This is a waste of the public's natural resources and needs to be addressed. Does this not contribute to the reported declines in catfish? If so, the proposed amendment will not have a positive effect on the fishery, but instead will result in a negative effect for the family fisherman.

All forms of fishing present a risk to the life of the fish being caught. More specifically fishing for catfish leads to a high number of fish being lethally hooked due to factors such as: methods utilized size of the bait, and natural feeding habits of the species. I feel the proposed limit on larger fish will have a negative impact if instituted, Many of the larger fish released will not survive and will result in waste of our precious resource.

I request the proposed amendment be rejected. However, if approved, I would ask the Commission to consider the following changes: 1) Enact the size and bag limits proposed to the Wabash and Ohio Rivers only. 2) Enact the size and bag limit amendments on Commercial Fishing only.

In closing, Please protect the liberties and heritage of the citizens and outdoorsmen of Indiana by regulating commercial and tournament fishing. Please do not place additional restrictions and hardships on individuals and Hoosier Families who rely on our natural resources to put food on their table.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Todd Campbell
3977 E Nicholson Hollow Rd
Salem, Indiana 47167
812-883-5671
Time stamp 03/02/2011 07:27:38 AM

Commentor Name Brian White
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State PA
Commentor City West Newton
Commentor Organization USCA
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)
Comment i think there should be a limit on catfish. they are a valuable resource that needs to be treated as such for future generations.
Time stamp 03/02/2011 09:37:13 PM

Commentor Name Albert Randall McDaniel
Commentor County 14
Commentor State KY
Commentor City Maceo
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment We would love to have a size limit as well as how many fish you can keep. If the commercial fishermen are worried they shouldn't be if they are fishing for spoonbill. We have a problem with them taking the peoples fish from public waters and selling them to paylakes. The paylakes are great for people who don't have a boat or the know how to find fish in the river. There is a paylaker in KY that runs trot lines as well as buying big fish but until now we never had a chance to make a difference. Maybe we should start by making the catfish a game fish. We tournament fish but also take people less fortunet out on our boats to have a trip of a lifetime. I spend a lot of money fishing tournaments up and down the Ohio river and to me there is nothing better than spending time on the water chasing the catfish. Please help us protect the fish we love. One other thing is for several months a year we can't fish some of the best holes on the river because of nets. They are not removed until their season is over. We CPR all fish. Catch, Photograph, and Release. I could have wrote a lot more but I have rambled on enough. Thank you for having this site so I could voice my opinion.

Randall McDaniel
Time stamp 03/03/2011 04:39:44 PM

Commentor Name Jason Bridges
Commentor County 50
Commentor State AL
Commentor City Arab
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I run a guide service on Wheeler Lake. I have seen first hand the damage that commercial fishing can do the trophy catfish population. Most of the trophy fish they catch are going straight to pay ponds or get killed. There is no market for big fish at the fish market. Farm raised catfish farms have hurt the commercial fisherman, so they found a new way to make money by raping a natural resource. Trophy catfish our no different than, deer, ducks, or bass ect. If you don't take action they will cease to exist. Alabama now has a one fish per person a day over 34in law in place and no live catfish transported across state lines. More and more states are coming on board. They have seen catfishing bring a lot revenue to there states with major tournaments like Cabelas and Bass Pro. Protect the Catfish.

Captain Jason Bridges
Time stamp 03/04/2011 05:52:17 AM

Commentor Name Eric L Eslinger
Commentor County 61
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Rockville
Commentor Organization none
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Dear Sirs,
I am a fisherman of my area and enjoy the many DNR lakes and rivers that i use to fish. I am concerned about the proposed catfish laws for my situation. I think putting a cap on the commercial fisherman makes sense but putting a cap on normal fisherman is a mistake. I would not take a or eat a 28inch catfish of any kind. The size that i enjoy eating is in the range of what you are propsoing to change, 10-15 inches. I think that would be a great mistake and don't agree with that change. Thanks for you time and consideration of my thoughts on the new laws.

Eric Eslinger
Time stamp 03/04/2011 07:30:48 PM

Commentor Name Troy Sarnowski
Commentor County Out of State
Commentor State MO
Commentor City Gasconade
Commentor Organization na
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment 5 fish limit of blues and Flatheads combined by sporting means per day and nor more than one over 36 inches

from all bodies of water except special regulation areas.

10 fish limit on channel catfish per day by sporting means no size limit in all bodies of water.

Commercial fishing slot limit. Catfish no smaller than 15 inches and no larger than 24 inch's may be taken by commercial means from any commercial waters, Not more than 30 blues and 10 Flatheads may be taken per day.

Commercial fishermen must keep and mail in every month forms provided by the state on number of fish taken, location where taken, size, and net weight of undressed live fish, and weight of dressed fish along with bills of sale. No fish taken by commercial means may be resold alive for the purpose of pay ponds or private stocking of ponds. Failure to submit commercial harvest forms 10 days after the end of the month will result in loss of commercial fishing privileges.

Time stamp 03/05/2011 12:28:28 AM

Commentor Name Thomas Wiseman

Commentor County 49

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Indianapolis

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment To whom it may concern: 3 years ago I started a petition online to get the catfish regulations changed. To date we have over 528 signatures and more are being added everyday. Sportsmen in the state of Indiana WANT this proposal to be a law! Indiana has the chance to be a trophy catfishing destination much like Virginia (James River) and Tennessee (Cumberland River). I and the 528+ members of the petition are asking that the laws be changed to the current proposal. Thank you for your time and concern in this matter.

Thomas "Scooter" Wiseman

Time stamp 03/05/2011 11:22:48 AM

Commentor Name william k keown

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State KY

Commentor City henderson

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I feel these proposed changes are much needed for the Ohio River. I recently retired and started fishing the Ohio River again. I am appauled by the number of catfish being taken by commerical fishing. The future of the River is in great danger. We need to make these changes and more.

Time stamp 03/07/2011 08:43:13 AM

Commentor Name Lance Pearman

Commentor County 61

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Rockville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I think the proposed changes will help Indiana's catfish population to sustain a level that will help provide future generations with enjoyment. I also bleieve the one "trophy" sized catfish is a great regulation to help sustain a larger breeding population. Thanks for your time. Lance

Time stamp 03/07/2011 09:03:26 AM

Commentor Name Justin Jagielski

Commentor County 82

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Evansville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I feel that this revision is a long time over-due. Thank you.

Time stamp 03/09/2011 06:23:19 PM

Commentor Name Jason E. lynam

Commentor County 15

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Lawrenceburg

Commentor Organization N/A

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment In case you dont want to read the whole story that i have written i want this to be heard at least, i am all for a slot limit on the ohio river for all fishermen and especially commercial fishermen. either a slot limit or a season that stops the commercial fishermen from raping our public waters all year round for there own profit. The commercial fishermen has been harvesting our lakes and ohio river for to long. I have been fishing the ohio river since i was 17 on my own in a boat and put hundreds of hours on this river between downtown cincinnati down to madison indiana to learn how to catch all species of catfish but mainly target bluecats. when i first started out i could just about drop a line anywhere in the river and have some luck with a few fish. i had not seen any commercial fishermen for the first four years of fishing. as i continued to put many hours on the water learning more effective ways to catch bluecats. in 2007 i fished the waters around Aurora Indiana with unbelievable success, i was catching 20 to 30 fish in an 8 hour day that were all of around 15 to 30 pounds. that following winter i noticed for the first time that there were 4 different commercial boats going threw those same waters dropping nets. at the time i didnt think much of it but the following summer when i finally got out on the water in spring time i went out and didnt catch a fish the first 4 trips out on the water. so i searched around to find them and found a few spots throughout the river where i could catch them to salvage the year. threw the whole spawning season there were more nets out then i had seen all year. this alone will put a huge dent in the population of our bluecats. i fish tournaments every weekend of the year between Ohio and Maddison and have noticed that every year the amount of fish being brought in has dropped tremendously. there is a huge tournament held every year out of Risng Sun Indiana that brings in over a 100 boats each tournament. It is a 2 day tournament and over the past 4 years the winning results have decreased by a half, there are statistics to back this up. every time i make a trip out on the water now which is around 3 times a week there are nets scattered threw all of the ohio river in front of creek mouths and in deep holes. I talked to one of the commercial fishermen at the ramp last year and asked him what the average weight they usually bring in is of one day of setting nets and i quote, "on an average day we bring in around 4500 pounds worth of catfish out of 8 nets that we set but this year we are lucky to get 1500 pounds". this told me that they are knowingly aware that they are making a dent on our population of catfish in these waters but they still have not slowed down, they are still out there every year during spawning season hard at it and threw the year as well. myself i thnk there should indefinately either be a slot limit put on the Ohio river for all fishermen including the commercial fishermen or at least some sort of season on them to where they cant just go out and slaughter our catfish all year round. they have been taking our bluecats out of the ohio river and been selling them to paylakes where they have a short lived life because they are piled in 1 or 2 acre lakes with little food or room to move for there own profit. something has to be done soon or the population of catfish on the ohio river is going to be to low to come back from. I have put to much time on the water without any good results for the past 2 years and dont expect it to be any different this upcoming year unless something is done quick. thanks for the chance to voince my opinion and hope you understand why i have decided what i have.

Time stamp 03/10/2011 05:48:57 PM

Commentor Name robert d berry

Commentor County 65

Commentor State IN

Commentor City mt vernon In

Commentor Organization DURACATS.com [member]

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I am all for the new proposed rule , to many large fish are being removed from our lakes and rivers. if this continues there will be no breeding stock to continue the spieces. the proposed rule has my utmost approval

Time stamp 03/15/2011 10:18:10 AM

Commentor Name James Edward Page

Commentor County 49

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Indianapolis

Commentor Organization Indy Lakes Paylakes and Camping

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment How can it be good to put more people out of business? Commercial fishermen, pay-fishing establishments, bait and tackle dealers, and anglers. The domino effect of big government strangling its citizens. Indiana has effectively ended its commercial fishing enterprises. And, criminals will still take whatever they want from public waters because the DNR has already set a precedent with Hubbard South Lakes in Martinsville in 2010. You can steal public fish and still stay in business.

Time stamp 03/15/2011 04:49:45 PM

Commentor Name Brian Crockett

Commentor County 84
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Terre Haute
Commentor Organization USCA
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I am in full support of this law as it needs to be passed to ensure the future of our catfisheries. My son, eight (8) years old, has become a very avid catfisherman as we have caught two 50lb 37" and 40" blue cats on the wabash around the Terre Haute area. I want to ensure he can pass this experience to his children as well. Any future laws to help reduce the harvest off 'breeding' age and size catfish needs to be reviewed and highly evaluated to put to law to save this natural resource. The catfishing tournament circuits that would use the Wabash and other internal rivers of IN would increase and bring much needed revenue to the state. Thanks for your time - Brian Crockett

Time stamp 03/17/2011 04:36:57 AM

Commentor Name Randy Johnson
Commentor County 69
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Versailles
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I for one don't think the Catfish population is in danger at all. I never fish lakes or rivers just farm ponds but do know a lot of people that do and they catch the heck out of them. I say just leave it alone it's fine how it is we have a lot bigger issues than Catfish....

Also I'm seeing a pattern from what I'm reading on different forums that I think is being pushed by tournament fishers wanting to keep their pockets full...

But this is just my opinion!

Time stamp 03/18/2011 12:06:16 AM

Commentor Name JAMES D. DAVIS
Commentor County 77
Commentor State IN
Commentor City FARMERSBURG
Commentor Organization DOUG&SIS' FISH MARKET
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I AM TOTALLY AGAINST THIS PROPOSAL. I CAN NOT RUN A FISH MARKET ON THREE FISH A DAY OR LESS.

Time stamp 03/19/2011 09:30:50 AM

Commentor Name Keith A Jenkins
Commentor County 63
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Winslow
Commentor Organization none
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I understand the reasons behind many changes to regulations. Be it do to health of the species or endangerment of not being in existence any longer, however the reasons I've been given to this change doesn't seem to fall in these pretences. REASONING I've been given is due to harvesting fish due to use in pay lakes in the south (not so much here in ind) and the fact that there is a growing number of people attempting to fish for larger catfish in this state so we wish to help them out. Well this is not what I consider a very good reason for change. I like to commercial fish (net) I like to catch them to eat and to sell and to let people have for fundraising activities, and let me say I prefer to several large fish than to have to clean a whole bunch of small ones. Also people that purchase commercial license do so for the right to sell these fish and to harvest them for profit (if so desired) we pay more to fish and have to do things under subject to rule that as a sportsman fisher you do not. gear is more, times on when we much check this gear is a must, every 48 hours etc. point is I don't care if it sold as a fillet or to a pay lake sold is sold and I don't see any reason to regulate maximum size/quantity for any reason. This doesn't affect the population breeding or health of these species but it does change the amounts of smaller fish that have to make the difference of lost pounds to produce the same in the end. Now that is going to press the issue of small numbers of these fish in rivers. Everyone wants to catch the big one when they out all I have to say is this, there are plenty of them out there but you got to know where to fish and you got to be on that river constantly as it changes to know these

areas. If you want to just know that you are going catch that monster on pole with no chance of failure, without doing time on that river without having to know your surroundings, without having to blame it on those guys with those nets..... Go to a pay lake! I don't see the sport in the guarantee if I can't harvest them a net and thank God for letting that big boy swim in there. guess that's why I fish with a pole sometimes myself. I like the challenge of catching that big and having to rattle him a bit, not having to expect it for some other reason. leave the big fish size restrictions along you are talking about fish that only weigh about twenty-twenty-five pounds, heck that isn't all that big anyways which is the point I want to make. The small size slot changing 10 inches to 15 now that we can live with. But please let us Keep more than one fish of these species over 28 inches (channel) or 35 inches (blue/flathead) that just isn't being very thoughtful on the subject. not to the fish or to the fishermen. thank you.

Time stamp 03/20/2011 01:09:54 PM

Commentor Name Tyla Merta

Commentor County 87

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Chandler

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I am against the new Catfish Amendments. My 19 year old daughter fishes with her father for the summer to earn some extra cash for college and if the changes occur, she will be denied quality time she spends with her father and denied the ability for her to make some money. She enjoys fishing with her father and finding teenagers today that care about this sport is a rarity. So please consider leaving things the way they are until an actual study can be done on this matter.

Time stamp 03/21/2011 07:11:43 PM

Commentor Name James E. Grubb

Commentor County 42

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Vincennes

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment Don't change the size limit on Channel Catfish from 10 inch to 15 inches, those are the best eating fish in the river!!! the 28 inch max limit on Channel Catfish is ok. The limits on Blue Catfish and Flathead Catfish to 15 inch minimum and 35 inch max is ok. Thanks James E. Grubb

Time stamp 03/21/2011 09:35:44 PM

Commentor Name Elzie Mason Randolph

Commentor County 55

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Mooresville

Commentor Organization Duracats

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I am a catfish tournament fisher as well as a recreational fisher, I am in tremendous agreement with the proposed rules changes pertaining to catfish. In my opinion, the changes would make fishing equal and fair to all catfisherman; tournament, commercial, and recreational.

I have heard commercial fisherman state that larger catfish is plentiful and abundant in our waters. However, I disagree with the statement. I know that during tournaments we are seeing less and less bigger fish weighed in. Keep in mind that as tournament fishers we are releasing all of our caught fish (big and small) back into the same bodies of water that they come from. It takes several years for a catfish to grow to substantial size and if the current laws stand, then there will soon be a scarcity of larger catfish. Allowing an unlimited number of larger catfish to be harvested (caught and removed from their natural body of water) on a regular basis has already made an impact on the numbers of larger fish. I for one would like to see my future children and grandchildren have the opportunity to go out fishing with the very real possibility of hooking a large catfish. The proposed law changes will make this possibility a reality. We must protect today what we pray for in the future.

I vote to pass the proposed law changes and make fishing an equal opportunity for everyone!

Time stamp 03/22/2011 02:30:03 PM

Commentor Name Tim Lange

Commentor County 10
Commentor State OH
Commentor City Springfield
Commentor Organization DuraCats
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment To whom it may concern,

My name is Tim Lange along with my wife Lynn Lange we have been fishing the Ohio River since 1994 for Catfish, we run the website www.HookedonCatfish.com we are a tournament husband and wife fishing team, we have done nothing but strict CPR standards over all the years we have been fishing and we have seen a major decline in the amount of large Catfish that were on the Ohio river over all the years we have been fishing.

With today's sophisticated electronics we know more about the Ohio river and what lies under the water than we did in 1994 and the big Catfish are disappearing at an alarming rate we have fished the DuraCats tournament series which started in 2006 to the present time. In 2006 there were numerous teams that brought large fish to the scales, what do we consider large fish that weighs 40 pounds or more, as each year went by those numbers started declining in fact in 2010 we had not seen a large fish brought to the scales till the last tournament of the year and these are the same teams that started fishing with us in 2006.

It's hard to anchor down on a spot when every hundred yards is a commercial net in the water and being from Ohio we know that these fish are going to paylakes, is it fair that I as a fisherman have to abide by rules and laws set forth by states that I fish in yet a commercial netter can drop his net gather as many as he wants off of a public waterway then transport it a paylake, it's time for the madness to stop, raping the Ohio River of large Catfish is wrong, my Grandchildren and my kids Grandchildren need to experience the thrill of a big fish on their line, but with no regulations of catfish size that dream will never be attained, look at what Tennessee, Alabama, Ohio and West Virginia are doing to protect these fish and it is working, Lynn Lange is the current West Virginia state BlueCat record holder, why because there are rules and laws protecting these fish, Ohio and West Virginia do not allow netting of fish in the Ohio river, and it takes years to grow these fish along with tons of bait

Please change the rules set stricter guidelines to protect this valuable resource before it is too late.

Thank you,

Tim and Lynn Lange
Springfield, Ohio

Time stamp 03/22/2011 03:22:30 PM

Commentor Name John Frisz
Commentor County 42
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Vincennes
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I think the 15 inch size limit is too much of a jump up from 10 inches. I agree that 10 inches is too small but I would prefer the new size limit be 12 or 13 inches. I agree with the upper limit you have proposed.

Time stamp 03/22/2011 05:21:18 PM

Commentor Name Winston Bush
Commentor County 29
Commentor State IN
Commentor City Sheridan
Commentor Organization
Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment My comment:

Today I attended the catfish rules amendment hearing in Indianapolis where we heard many and various comments both for and against the proposed amendment.

A commercial fisherman and pay lake owner from Ohio gave an in depth account of how tough it is for him to make a very modest living and how the new rule will unfairly penalize him, his business and his family.

He spoke at length about how he has taken many, many thousands of pounds of big trophy catfish from the Ohio River and emphasized how the river is still full of those big catfish that he has to catch because they are vital to the economic success of his business.

Unfortunately, he failed to mention an important detail until after the hearing had come to the point where comments were no longer being recorded. It was then that he approached me and the group of sport-fishermen I was with and said for all to hear:

(Not verbatim, but almost) "I'm not taking the fish you guys want protected from the Ohio River any more. I get all my fish from the Mississippi; I have a place down there and I go there to get my fish and haul them back to Ohio"

How can it be that a business that provides only a modest income and presumably needs to work in the most economically efficient way possible, is close to a river that is supposedly full of big fish that it has to catch to stay in business, ignores all those fish and instead incurs the cost of traveling hundreds of miles to the Mississippi River to procure the fish it needs and then haul them back to Ohio? Surely, that suggests that the supposedly plentiful big catfish of the Ohio River are not in fact there to be caught.

Thank you,

Time stamp 03/22/2011 05:46:01 PM

Commentor Name Randy Merta

Commentor County 87

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Chandler

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I again want to say that I am 'against' this proposal. I attended both meetings and spoke at both. Thanks for hearing my opinion. Randy

Time stamp 03/22/2011 08:18:24 PM

Commentor Name Randy Bunte

Commentor County 42

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Vincennes

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I thank you should be able to keep a 12 or 13 inch catfish and keep 2 on big fish.

Time stamp 03/23/2011 05:01:25 AM

Commentor Name Brandon Leas

Commentor County 90

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Bluffton

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment There should be no regulation on the size of the Bullhead catfish at all. I live in Bluffton and fish the Wabash river quite a bit. And when fishing for catfish it seems as though 85% of the catfish I catch are Bullheads. There is an abundance of them in there and seems as though they are taking over the river.

Time stamp 03/23/2011 01:25:26 PM

Commentor Name Dustin Doss

Commentor County 61

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Tangier

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment a change needs to be made! im sick of commercial fisherman exploiting our waterways. they keep every fish they catch. how is there supposed to be a tomorrow for the sport of catfishing if there are no conservative efforts being practiced by our local commercial fishermen? its simple, if you continue to allow commercial fishermen to overharvest our rivers then one day in the near future catfish will be another name added to the list of protected species in indiana. for example, i fish the wabash river near cayuga, indiana and just in the last few years the quality of fishing has rapidly declined. i have my theories as to why the fishing is so poor and it is the major increase in netting that occurs on this river. growing up i could go down to the river and fish for flathead catfish and catch them often. anymore finding a flathead on this stretch of river is next to impossible and i believe it is due to the fact that there is no regulation of harvests on catfish. i talked to a man that nets on this particular stretch of river and he told me that last year he caught and killed 37 flatheads from 1 to 45 pounds, all coming from one net in the same location. concentrations of flatheads this size are basically unheard of on this small river which in turn makes them extremely vulnerable because a commercial fisherman sees a catfish as a dollar sign and he wont remove his net from this area until every flathead is pulled out of this hole. this type of selfish fishing is what contributes to dwindling populations of catfish in our local rivers, and this is why changes need to be made!

Time stamp 03/23/2011 06:55:15 PM

Commentor Name Bob Tyler

Commentor County 69

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Holton

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I myself am getting tired of all this rule change stuff. Everytime i run into the DNR on river or lake there is a new law i am breaking not on purpose just getting hard to read the rules!!!!!!!

I see people on my fishing boards freakin out like there is no catfish left but they got vidoe after video and pic after pic of monster fish!!!! Now doesnt something sound a little fishy with that SERIOUSLY.....

I say there are plenty fish to be caught. Leave well enough alone and keep on fishing!!!!

Thank you very much!

Bob Tyler

Time stamp 03/24/2011 01:16:57 AM

Commentor Name jimmy haines

Commentor County 41

Commentor State IN

Commentor City greenwood

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment i am here to state that if there is a change in catfishing bag limits that could get worse in the furture of the sport yes i have been fishing all my life and mostly catfshing yes love the sport i am am here to stop the bag limit chnage and not allow commercial fishermen and private owners to take public leave the public in place

Time stamp 03/24/2011 06:22:23 AM

Commentor Name Lance Pearman

Commentor County 61

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Rockville, Ito N

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I think these proposed rule changes would be a lengthy step in preserving a fishery that is damaged from over harvest. This last week I pulled into one of my favorite fishing areas and noticed 6 nets within a 100 yard area that I am confident are harvesting trophy blue catfish. With this in mind I hope that you limit the number of trophy catfish on can harvest from our river ecosystems. While doing this i think it is possible to allow a commercial fisherman to take eater sized catfish in a manner in which the environment can sustain itself. Thanks for considering this.

Time stamp 03/24/2011 11:02:05 AM

Commentor Name Kyle Corley

Commentor County 73

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Shelbyville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I like this rule proposal. Our waterways could definitely use some improvements, and this s an excellent start. or children and grandchildren will appreciate it as well. I hope this slot limit gets passed.

Time stamp 03/24/2011 01:31:00 PM

Commentor Name Jason E. Lynam

Commentor County 15

Commentor State IN

Commentor City lawrenceburg

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I have made a comment before but feel i need to make it more clear with less words. commercial fishermen are consistently raping our waters on a year to year basis. I have seen the damage done myself personally and it has effected the number and size that i have caught in the past few years tremendously. i see them during spawning season, which is when they are at there biggest size, more then threw the whole year. i dont have to explain what this obviously does to the population of our catfish. i run tournaments out of tanners and fish many tournaments that have many different paticipants and they all have the same story to tell on how they are effecting our fishing population. the solutions that i have thoughts on doing is:

1. making either a season threw the year that they are allowed to harvest cats, preferably not during spawning season.
 2. bann it all together
 3. put a size restiction along with the number of fish allowed to be taken out of our public waters on a daily/yearly basis.
- these are just my suggestions, thanks and hopefully something can be done for the sake of fishing all together.

Time stamp 03/24/2011 02:05:21 PM

Commentor Name Greg Schwipps

Commentor County 55

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Wilbur

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment One last comment after having attended both public hearings on this matter. At the Vincennes meeting, we heard very little about catfish being taken to paylakes. One commercial fishermen said he knew of only one colleague who sold fish to paylakes -- others implied the sale of fish to paylakes was merely a rumor. But at the Indy meeting, the paylake owners were out in force, and they were honest about their take and their intentions. While paylakes do a great job of giving everyone an easy place to fish, this doesn't mean that everyone fishing there deserves to catch a trophy catfish. "Everyone wants to catch big catfish," one paylake owner claimed. Well, we don't allow big bucks to be fenced into one-acre pens to be shot by hunters paying a fee. Every hunter wants to shoot a big buck, too. But some things just aren't accessible to everyone -- some things must be earned. We shouldn't diminish our natural resources into commodities some can then resell for their own profit. (Especially in another state!)

We also heard from fish processors that any size cat can be cleaned and sold for food. That's what the under 34" fish are for. So commercial fishermen selling their fish for food should feel little economic impact. (And we heard both commercial and sportfishermen admit big cats don't offer the best eating.)

Finally, keep the lower limit at 15 inches. It will match Illinois's limit and give the fish a chance to breed. (A 10" fish, the current limit, can swim in the bottom of a five gallon bucket. It's a baby!) Anyone who claims he can catch a 12" fish but not a 15" fish needs to follow this advice: Cast one more time.

I appreciate the DNR's willingness to hear us on this matter, and I appreciate the proposal. We have neglected what could be a real trophy fishery for far too long. Other places have created real tourist draws with their catfish -- Red River in Minnesota, James River out east, Santee Cooper in SC. Indiana can do the same. We have the water to produce big fish, and indeed, there are some big fish out there now. Let's give them a chance to reproduce even more big cats. Let's treat catfish like every other sportfish in this state and give them the protection they deserve.

Thanks for listening.

Time stamp 03/24/2011 03:40:33 PM

Commentor Name Max Stephen Volz

Commentor County 32

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Danville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I write in support of the proposed rule change. The Wabash and White River already has sustained heavy damage due to commercial harvesting. This proposed rule change is a small but very necessary step in protecting Indiana fisheries. Some states have already started imposing much stricter rules. States known for great fisheries have had these laws for years. Indiana needs much stricter rules so that our inland rivers can recover from damage already done, and so that the Ohio River does not suffer the same fate. The only way to protect Indiana fisheries is to pass modern up to date laws and to heavily enforce them.

Time stamp 03/24/2011 06:10:34 PM

Commentor Name ronald j overton

Commentor County 26

Commentor State IN

Commentor City fort branch

Commentor Organization i want to eat 12 in fiddlers

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment a fifteen inch cat is too much of an increase to be able to go fishing & come home with a fish to eat more times than not you will be skunked twelve inches is plenty short !!!! i am against the rule as preposed i have no problem w/max end of rule i want to be able to go fishing an come home w/some fish to eat i do not want to have to eat a catfishfarm fish!!!! i went to the meeting at vinncenes an the majority agreed with what i have said commercial fisherman included !!!

Time stamp 03/24/2011 06:19:56 PM

Commentor Name chad a. willett

Commentor County Out of State

Commentor State KY

Commentor City henderson

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment this rule is something indiana And KENTUCKY should have done along time ago .i am a very avid catfish angler on the ohio river and have been for several years .the ohio river system has been all but raped of the catfish population they are still there but the number of them and the weights are suffering greatly it seems every where you look anymore when on the river there a commercial net etc.... i am glad to see indiana stepping up to the plate on this and hope kentucky follows.....

Time stamp 03/24/2011 07:13:12 PM

Commentor Name Nicholas Loch

Commentor County 42

Commentor State IN

Commentor City VINCENNES

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I am in favor of the proposed limits on the size and number of catfish taken from Indiana rivers. I am a sport fisherman and have witnessed too many times commercial fisherman talking large blue catfish by the truckload during the springtime floods. Big blue cats are very easy to catch at during the spring in high water using limb lines and the commercial fisherman take a heavy toll on the species.

Regardless of the rules changes; enforcement is almost non-existance on the lower White River and on the Wabash river below Vincennes. Illinois fisherman are terribly bad about not marking their lines and not checking them regularly; especially around St. Francisville, IL.

Time stamp 03/24/2011 08:58:58 PM

Commentor Name Ryan Radez

Commentor County 49

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Indianapolis

Commentor Organization United States Catfish Association

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I believe that commercial fishing should be illimated all together in major rivers in Indiana, all over the country if it was up to me. I do however fish Eagle Creek and keep my small channel cats sometimes to eat and they are plentiful in numbers. I have never kept a catfish over 5 pounds, when they get big they are not good to eat and I believe if everyone left the bigger catfish in the water, then they could reproduce and there would be more bigger catfish to catch. I'm sure you've heard this already, "CPR" Catch, Photo, Release. It's what 99.9% of the guys on the ASCA practice.

Thanks for your time and consideration,
Deputy Ryan Radez

Marion County Sheriffs Department

Time stamp 03/25/2011 05:31:21 AM

Commentor Name Julie Burlingame

Commentor County 85

Commentor State IN

Commentor City North Manchester

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I would like to voice my support for the proposed catfish regulations. My kids love to fish for big flathead catfish with their dad and I want their kids to have the same opportunity someday. Please pass these changes to ensure the future of RECREATIONAL catfishing in Indiana.

Time stamp 03/25/2011 06:59:19 AM

Commentor Name Eric Radez

Commentor County 49

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Indianapolis

Commentor Organization Untied States Catfish Association

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment I fully support the proposed changes to catfish size and quantity of daily catch.

Please offer catfish anglers the same dignity and opportunity that bass fisherman have known for years.

Best regards,

Eric Radez

Time stamp 03/25/2011 08:19:56 AM

Commentor Name Chelsea Merta

Commentor County 53

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Bloomington

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment My name is Chelsea Merta, and I oppose this rule change. I do so not only from a financial standpoint, because my parents own a fishery on the Ohio River, but also from a biological standpoint.

There has been absolutely no science or studies done on the catfish species in the Ohio River, and what is appropriate for one species in one river is not appropriate for another species in a different river. Further, the flathead catfish is on the EPA's federal list of invasive species. The channel catfish and blue catfish are also listed on other states' invasive species lists.

Why is Indiana trying to protect three species that are federally recognized as destructive to natural habitats? The only different between these catfish and the aquatic nuisance species (or Asian carp) is that catfish can be eaten.

Even without the fact that these species are all considered invasive, how will limiting the number of larger catfish help these species grow? Common sense tells us that limiting the number of bigger catfish will shift the focus onto the smaller catfish, which are the ones that actually spawn. If the fishermen therefore have to target the smaller catfish to sustain their businesses and way of life, then the catfish relied upon to spawn will decrease in number, and the population will decline anyway. The bigger catfish will then be able to eat native fish species, uproot local vegetation, and continue to cause problems for recreational boaters and swimmers. This plan proposed by the state makes no sense, biologically, ecologically, or economically.

Continuing with the discussion of the aquatic nuisance species, hundreds if not thousands of this species are caught in commercial fishermen's nets each year and are destroyed to prevent further propagation. In short, the commercial fishermen are doing a more efficient job at limiting this invasive species than the state DNR is.

The tournament fishermen can raise as much of a fuss about this issue as they want, but science is science, and there has been none addressing the Ohio River. What's further, fishing for catfish in Indiana waters is not a week hobby or sport for the commercial fishermen - it's their way of life and the state of Indiana has no business meddling and obstructing these small businesses.

Therefore, I propose that this rule be scrapped altogether. The state of Indiana should not be allocating its resources to protecting destructive species like these catfish, and should recognize the balance struck by the commercial fishermen in protecting the aquatic ecosystem of Indiana waters. The number of catfish in Indiana waters have undoubtedly increased since the 1970s, even with the increase in commercial fishermen, so please THINK - what would happen if you removed their ability to make a living and control these populations? More destruction would occur to our already-fragile aquatic

ecosystem, requiring more research, funds, and work from the state.

As the saying goes, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

Time stamp 03/25/2011 10:18:36 AM

Commentor Name Chelsea Merta

Commentor County 87

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Chandler

Commentor Organization Merta Fisheries

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment My name is Chelsea Merta, and I oppose this rule change. I do so not only from a financial standpoint, because my parents own a fishery on the Ohio River, but also from a biological standpoint.

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As the saying goes, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

Time stamp 03/25/2011 10:19:18 AM

Commentor Name Luke Hiam

Commentor County 82

Commentor State IN

Commentor City Evansville

Commentor Organization

Commentor Email [Email Commentor](#)

Comment There are plenty of large catfish and this proposal is utterly pointless. We see many large catfish when we bowfish at night on the river. If anything, this will lead to stunting of the fish population. If you are basing this proposal on a fish survey please take into account that any fish survey samples a small portion of what is actually there. If you want proof there are plenty of fish, go out at night and shine a spotlight on the water. I do not even harvest or eat catfish but am still against this out of principle.

Time stamp 03/31/2011 05:20:33 PM

DNR.

I commercial Fish in The
Wabash River Each Year Since
1979. IF The DNR Changes
The minimum Size To 15 inches
IT will destroy The CHANCES
OF The Commercial Fisherman
TO MAKE ANY Money.

I CAN see A Change
OF minimum Size To 12 inches.
THis should not hurt The Commercial
Fisherman AND ALSO Help The DNR
WITH THEIR Ideas & Rules.
Respect Fully THANK you For Reading This.

Michael L. Philipps
2690 Farmersville Rd.
Mt. Vernon IN 47620

M.L.P.

GENTLEMEN'

My NAME IS DAN JONES, I OWN MIDWEST FISH FARMS
with my Family in LOVELAND OHIO,
WE ALSO HAVE A FISHING LAKE AND HAVE BEEN
THERE SINCE 1968. WE TRANSPORT FISH TO
MANY OTHER PAY LAKES, COUNTY LAKES AND PONDS.
WE HAVE BOUGHT FISH FROM COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN
FOR 40 YEARS AND COUNT ON THEIR FISH TO
RUN OUR LAKE. I BELIEVE CHANGES WOULD
PUT ALOT OF FAMILIES OUT OF WORK. 2, 3RD AND 4TH
GENERATION FISHERMEN. - ALSO 2 CLUBS,
CAMPGROUNDS, PARKS. PAY LAKES. AND ALL
THESE EMPLOYERS. THE RIVER IS IN
BETTER SHAPE NOW THEN IN ALL MY 40 YEARS.
THE FISH ARE AS ABUNDANT NOW AS EVER,
NOT JUST SHOVELHEADS BUT CHANNEL CATS,
BIG BLUES ARE IN THE RIVER LIKE NEVER BEFORE.
THE SIZE LIMIT WOULD PUT MOST COMMERCIAL
FISHERMEN OUT OF BUSINESS, BECAUSE THEY
DO NOT JUST NEED SMALL FISH BUT BIG FISH TO.

MIDWEST FISH FARM
6444 SMITH ROAD
LOVELAND OHIO
45140

Dan Jones
MIDWEST FISH FARMS

March 11, 2011

Dear Sir,

I understand there is a proposal to make a limit of 15 inches on catfish.

I disagree with this proposal. The best eating catfish are 10-11-12 inch. Anything larger has a stronger taste and a lot more fat.

Please consider these facts before changing the rules.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Thomas Skiles
Rossville, IN.
46065

March 2, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is David Cottrell, I am a commercial fisherman licensed in Kentucky. My son, Joshua, and I pay over \$900.00 per year to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources in license, tags, and permit fees.

I am writing to request that you do not pass the new catfish size limits proposed by the great state of Indiana. Passing this new size limit would actually hurt the fishing on the Ohio River. I have spoken with several Ohio River Bass fishermen and Bass fishing clubs and they also are against this and feel it will hurt the Bass fishing on the Ohio River, which has greatly improved in the past decade. Cat fishing has also improved greatly for all fisherman sports and commercial on the Ohio River.

Commercial fishermen catch big cats to stock pay lakes in Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio for thousands of people to fish. Take away the big fish you take away fishing for thousands that cannot afford boats and gear to fish the Ohio River but can afford to fish pay lakes. Big fish are commercial fisherman's money fish.

If not harvested, these big blues and flatheads will consume all the crappie, bass, stripes and many game fish which also are now doing better than they ever have in the Ohio River.

Most if not all commercial cat fishermen will have to retire as they will no longer be able to sustain a livelihood cat fishing if your new rules are passed.

Commercial fishermen at the present time catch and destroy thousands and thousands of pounds of bighead and silver carp apiece per season. Once you pass your new rules then Kentucky will be persuaded to follow. The end result will be the "New" Ohio River with lots of small & medium size blue cats and flatheads, very few Bass, crappie and game fish and lots and lots of bighead and silver carp. Why ruin the river now when it's greater now that it has ever been?

If you look on some of the catfish clubs websites you will see pictures of huge catfish from the Ohio River. Look at the pictures, read the tournament results and you will see that they are catching more and bigger fish now than they ever have. These are the people that complain about commercial fishing and they complain about pay lakes. They don't realize that the things they complain about are what have made their fishing better.

F & F Pay Lake, LLC
2997 State Route 138 E
Rumsey, KY 42371

Natural Resource Commission
Division of Hearing
Indiana Government Center North
100 North Senate Ave
Room N501
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2200

To Whom It May Concern:

Let me start by introducing myself; my name is Heath Frailley, I am an owner of pay lakes in Calhoun, KY. I am also a commercial fisherman, a husband, and a father to two daughters. A great deal of my family's income revolves around the Ohio River Fisheries. I am writing to express my concerns that if the proposed law change of the thirty five inch limit is passed, it will greatly affect my business and more importantly my family's lively hood.

The individuals that come to my pay lakes come for several different reasons; some come to fish for farm raised catfish that are the perfect size for dinner, some come just to enjoy the day, but the majority of people that come to fish are there for the sheer excitement they feel when they make that big catch. The customers want to catch a bigger catfish than they have ever caught before; they want to win the biggest fish contest. My business depends on stocking my lakes with the biggest and best catfish.

At least seventy five percent of my fish come from the Ohio River systems. Even though I am a Kentucky resident and a commercial license holder, all of the water I fish borders your state. My biggest concern is that when Indiana law changes, Kentucky will soon follow. I personally have been a part of the fishing business for several years and have seen no signs, nor have any fisherman I have spoken with, that the big fish population is being depleted. I have experienced just the opposite.

I am urging you to reconsider before this law is passed. At least take a decent amount of time to perform adequate studies and research. Please survey those that would most be affected by this law change. Also, I would like for you to consider the ramifications that this law could have on the ever growing concern of mine; the ever growing population of the Asian carp.

Once again, please consider the devastating loss of income, this law could bring about for a great deal of us.

Thank You for Your time,
Jerime Heath Frailley

FEB. 28, 2011

DEAR SIRs;

IN REGARDS TO YOUR CATFISH Rule
CHANGES I WILL EXPRESS MY COMMENTS
IN THIS LETTER.

HAVING LIVED CLOSE TO AND FISHED IN
THE WABASH FOR MY ENTIRE LIFE, (GIBSON CO.)
I UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR CHANGES IN
THE TAKING OF CATFISH FROM THE RIVER.

IF AM AN AVIO FISHERMAN AND USE
THE WABASH FROM GRAYVILLE ILL. TO
MT. CARMEL ILL. ALONG GIBSON CO. AS A
SPORT FISHERMAN, CATCHING & EATING CATFISH IS
ONE LIFE'S PLEASURE THAT I ENJOY ALONG
WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS, YOUNG & OLD ALIKE.

I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT A 10" FISH WAS
TO SMALL TO KEEP AND FOR SOME ONE TO
KEEP AN UNLIMITED AMOUNT OF THEM IS MIS-
MANAGEMENT OF THIS RESOURCE. AND THIS
HAPPENS OFTEN. HOWEVER A 15" CATFISH WEIGHS
OVER 2 LB. FROM MY EXPERIENCE I CAN TELL
YOU IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO CATCH ENOUGH
15" FISH TO CLAIM IT AS A GOOD DAY ON THE RIVER.
WE REALLY HAVE TO WORK AT IT TO CATCH ENOUGH
TO EAT WITH ONLY 12" AND UP IN LENGTH.

PLEASE CONSIDER 12" OR 13" SIZE LIMIT.
THAT IS ABOUT RIGHT FOR THE TABLE AND THE
SIZE THAT CATFISH FARMS SELL. OVER

The other size limits proposed sound great, Although A 28" channel is RARE in this part of the River. I have never seen one over 22" in my time, I'm 56 yrs old.

If you're Really interested in increasing the size & quantity of fish, put a daily limit of 25 @ 13" each min.

As you should know nets are the reason for the decline in population of fish in some areas of the Wabash. So much so that it becomes difficult to catch enough to eat with rod & reel in the fall. you can fish an area out. I myself would like to ^{see} nets removed for at least 1 yr and then a season of 3 months after that and Illinois do the same.

In closing, I believe that a 15" min. rule will only help the netters retrieve larger fish and make it more difficult for everybody else to enjoy partaking of our natural resource - Fresh Fish from the Wabash.

Sincerely,

Kent D. Fetcher

Gibson County

Kent D. Fetcher

9250 W. 8005.

Owensville, IN. 47665

Dear Natural Resource Commission,

My name is Robert Hubbard. I am writing you today to voice my concern over your administration putting a size or slot limit on commercial fishing in the Ohio River. What is the need, the river has more fish than ever. My business is all about trophy catfish, to put a size or slot limit on these rivers, will be detrimental to my business, as well as many other similar businesses. I will be doomed. I will lose everything. I want an equal opportunity to make a living. It is my understanding that a small group is upset and hating on commercial fisherman; I don't think this should warrant any limitations or changes at this time especially with the economy still struggling now. It would devastate far more small businessmen than it would benefit a small group of commercial fisherman haters.

I have the number one pay lake in Indiana, people come from all over to catch my trophy catfish. At my lake all catfish are for catch and release and are well taken care of. In spite of this, some still die and those fish have to be replaced each year. My catfish are 15 pounds and up (the bigger the better) and come from the Ohio River. I have four lakes on my property. In the six years that I have been open, the trophy cats are my biggest drawl to get people to visit my lakes. To stop the fishing for these trophy fish will close me down. I create jobs for people to help in the bait shop and on the grounds, I bring a lot of business to the surrounding businesses in this area. Not only will it affect me, it will affect them as well. I believe this to be true for all the other pay lakes in Indiana and surrounding states that have similar trophy fishing as well.

PLEASE TAKE THIS LETTER SERIOUSLY. I ask for a response with any suggestions from you that I could do in order to get this proposal stopped.

Thank you. Sincerely,

Robert V. Hubbard

8200 E. Old State Road 144

Mooresville, Indiana 46158

317-532-7197

My name is James Reed and I have held a Kentucky Commercial fishing license for thirty years. I would like to make a apply to the appose rule change that has been brought to my attention by the state of Indiana. That a size limit is not needed to be put on the blue cat and flathead catfish in the Ohio River. I have been making a living for my family since 1982 commercial fishing on the Ohio River for catfish.

There is over 300 commercial fisherman licensed in Kentucky and 18 licensed in Indiana. 75% of our market we have to stay in business is by catching catfish and selling them alive to pay lakes. By putting a 35 inch size limit on these fish would mean we would have to release 80% of the fish we catch in the Ohio River and putting a size limit on these catfish we would all be forced out of business by this law change.

Over my 30 years of commercial fishing the Ohio River from Cincinnati to the Mississippi River for catfish. And all the pressure that has been put on the harvesting of big catfish by others and since 1970 and has not by no means depleted these fish.

In 1980 the blue cat rarely existed in the Camelton Pool and now they are commonly caught fifty to eighty pounds each. And has produced a new Indiana state record in the early 2000's at 105 pounds. Even so in the Marklin Pool which I have fished the most. Over the last 25 years the blue cat rarely existed their in the early 1990s and by 2008 a new Ohio State record was caught at 96 pounds. Articles have been written about sport fisherman commonly catching big blues 40 to 60 pounds and how the blue cat has exploded over the last 10 years in this river system.

When I started fishing this pool in the early 80s a 40 pound flathead was rarely caught. Now we commonly catch flathead over 50 pounds and have seen them up to 70 pounds. the first blue cat we started catching was around 1990 and now we commonly catch these fish daily up to 60 pounds the majority of the big blues and flatheads that we catch here now would run 20 to 50 pounds each.

My honest opinion and proven fact is that by all means there is more big catfish in the Ohio River today then there has been since 1950. A lot of this is due to the better water Quality in the rivers today and of a healthy harvest of these fish being taken by the commercial fisherman.

Dura Cats and other catfish organizations are pushing these rule changes on states thinking its going to make things better for their catfish organizations and not considering the damages to all the people who has invested their lives and money to the rules and regulations has been putt in place by states.

Me and my family has invested our entire lives and labors and over a million dollars around these laws and regulations that has been putt in place by these states to make a Business which provides our total income for our family which created growth to the economy and jobs to others and has also brought the sport of trophy cat fishing to over million people in the tri-state area. Which also has provided millions of dollars generated through fishing tackles, bait supplies, and all other types of revenue generated through over 300 pay lakes in Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky. All of these pay lakes are depending on the supply of these catfish that exceed the 35 inch size limit to maintain and operate these businesses for the ongoing interest in trophy cat fishing at our pay lakes. People just do not come out and pay to catch small fish at these pay lakes. These fish have to come from somewhere and the only source that we have left is the Ohio River System and if this law is passed it will be the end for all of us that has invested so much around

the rules and regulations that has been put in place by these states.

I would like to those in power to change this regulation to please look at www.DuraCats.com this is your Indiana catfish association it has all of their tournament records and fish records posted on this site and you will see that there is no need to make this rule change. The biggest fish ever caught in one of their tournaments was a 96 pound blue cat which was caught in the December of 2010. They have their top catfish pools on the Ohio River listed and you will see that there is no problem of having fish caught and having bigger fish caught every year and setting poundage records in the last 3 years.

If all of your die hard river catfisherman would answer this question true fully. Has the cat fishing in the Ohio River gotten better and produced bigger fish in the last 10 years they would all answer this question yes. Because the proof is in the new Indiana state record and the new Ohio state record and all of the catfish articles that has been written in the last 10 years about the Ohio River and the oncoming increase of these big catfish being caught and the www.DuraCats.com can back up this comment which I have stated.

The question that I have is how all this managed to happen while hundreds of people have made their living harvesting these trophy catfish out of the Ohio River system. To think that the blue cat rarely existed in this river system 20 years ago.

I know that one factor that the state considers is the amount of sportfishing license's sold verses the amount of revenue taken in through the sale of commercial fishing license. The fact is out of all the sportfishing license sold in the state how many of these license were sold just for the people to fish the Ohio River for trophy catfish? I think that the question can be found on www.DuraCats.com/tournament reports with some tournaments having 10 boats 21 entries and some being as big as 35 teams. I would say that there is no more than 100 Ohio River die hard trophy catfisherman in the whole state of Indiana. There is plenty of big fish being caught by this organization to hold a strong interest to their sport. I feel that there is a healthy population of big fish in the Ohio River for us all to benefit from and to allow others to come to enjoy the sport of trophy catfisherman in our tri-state paylakes.

These catfisherman think that its going to make things better for them to stop us from harvesting fish from the Ohio River. I know from fact that these fish on the increase in the Ohio River today instead of stopping the harvest of these fish the state should promote commercial to help keep these #1 predators under control in the river system.

The blue cats average life span is believe to be somewhere between 20 years and eats and average of 6 pounds a day. Most of the previous world record catfish was aged from 16 to 18 years of age.

Most states that has stocked the fish have somewhat regrets to the total annihilation of other species of fish in these waters. I think the state should consider the effects that this dominant fish have in the river on other species of fish that over 90% percent of their sport fishing license are sold for if the commercial fisherman are stopped from harvesting these fish from out of the river. If you don't believe this check out Georgia's rivers the Altama and the Coosa rivers and the reports that the big flathead catfish has totally annihilated a lot of other species in these river systems and that the state allows no commercial fishing in these waters.

By putting a size limit on catfish the sportfisherman believes that it will produce more big fish in the river system this is not true with an over population of fish will grow smaller and this will not take long. In Santee Cooper, South Carolina produced a new world record blue cat in 1998 after these fish had only been introduced to the lake for 16 years. After the ongoing battle

with in the state between sport fisherman and commercial fisherman the state stopped the harvest of these big cats from the lake in 2003. The record still holds today and the fish have seen to have gotten considerably smaller in the last 10 years and the lake has suffered tremendously over the downswing of other species in the lake.

I have witnessed this first hand on the Tennessee River. I have commercial fished the Tennessee River for about 10 years and catching fish over 100 pounds every year and lots of fish weighing over 70 pounds. There was a lake on the Tennessee River called Wattsbar they had been closed all commercial fishing for years it had been opened for trot line fishing only and that year we set up and fished one whole season thinking we were going to catch all kinds of monster cats but the truth was the biggest fish we caught weighed only 58 pounds that season and the majority of the fish we caught weighed around 30-45 pounds.

I would like the state to consider the oncoming problem in the river system with the bighead and Asian carp problem. The commercial fisherman are killing millions of pounds of these fish each year out of the river system. If the size limit is put on the catfish there is no way we can afford to keep operating in this business and help with trying to stop this ongoing problem.

I would like everyone to consider the previous economy problem each state faces I believe that one of the biggest problems that has caused our nations economy problems is the fact that no one ever considers the wellfare of others. Factories have taken our jobs to other countries for cooperate greed thinking not of the long term effects it would have on our nations economy there is laws and regulations passed everyday that no one really considers how it would effect peoples lively hoods.

I would like to ask everyone of you in athoritic to rule on this law to consider these facts before you do so.

1. Commercial fishing has been taken place on the Ohio River since 1970 and selling big catfish to pay lakes and the documented fact is the fish have grown bigger and more abundant with this taken place .
2. There is a healthy population of big fish in our rivers to maintain a strong interest in trophy cat fishing and the proof is in the recent 2 new state record fish in the last 7 years endless catfish articles that has been published on fish being caught out of the rivers and by www.DoraCats.com postings of their tournaments and fish weigh ins in the last 3 years.
3. consider the effects that the river will suffer from the loss of other species of fish that so many sport fisherman persue in the river. If these catfish are not harvested by the commercial fisherman I know that the Indiana Bass Federation which is one of the biggest organizations o f sport fishing in Indiana is not in faver of this law change
4. Consider the effect that the commercial fisheries is having on controlling the bighead and Asian carp problem in the river.
5. Consider that 75% of the market which we have for our catfish is that fish that exceeds the 35 inch size limit and that these fish would be about 80% percent of the fish we catch which run between 20 to 50 pounds each.
6. Consider the millions of people over the tri-state area that get enjoyment in catching these fish in pay lakes and the revenue that is generated through these businesses state wide.
7. And at least take in consideration of how many peoples lively hoods would be taken from them after they have invested their lives, and money into the laws that has been put in place by these

states and why should this law be changed to cater to a small minority of fisherman that already have fishing better than they have ever experienced in the river in the last 10 years. There is no proof or evidence that has been given that can show that the harvesting of these fish is by no means hurt the fishing in the Ohio River.

I would like to ask that if the state truly believes that these fish are being depleted from the rivers. To take the time and go out with a commercial fisherman and gather information first hand for a couple years to prove the facts that I have stated in this letter is true. I am available to help any time with this cause I can be reached at 740-378-6606

Thanks for allowing me to make this statement and having a public meeting
James Reed

~~JAMES REED~~
65904 ST RT 124
Reedsville OH
45772

My name is Melvin Sowders I am 54 years old and the only source on income that I have to support my family is by catching catfish and selling them to pay lakes. A lot of the fish that I sell is to Eric Hess Clear Creek Hatchery a fish hauler in Indianapolis for pay lakes.

I live in Kentucky along the Ohio River here at Cannelton Dam. Most of the boat ramps I use to fish are in Indiana and half of the nets I fish are on the Indiana banks. If this law is passed here on the Ohio River its going to destroy me and my family and the only means to support them. The only markets are for the bigger fish which would exceed the 35 inch size limit. Most of all the fish we keep to sell to the pay lakes start at 15 pounds and up.

I have been fishing for catfish here on the river for about 20 years and the biggest fish I have ever caught was 96 pounds just 2 years ago. Every summer I still catch plenty of big fish on the river after I have been doing this here for 20 years. Its proof here at Cannelton Dam that the fish are being caught here now bigger than ever before.

One of my favorite past times is to take my boat and fishing poles and fish behind Cannelton Dam for catfish. Believe me there is no problem here for me and others catching plenty of cats here on fishing poles.

I just don't understand why this law should be passed after so many of us has invested so much into over the years to have the means of supporting ourselves and family.

At my age and the way the economy is I just don't know what I will do if this is taken from me.

Sincerely,

Melvin Sowders

Melvin Sowders

1: <u>Melvin Sowders</u>
<u>2916 Herbark Rd</u>
<u>Reynolds Station Ky</u>
<u>42368</u>

To: Natural Resource commission division
- of hearings

On seeing the new rules on catfish, I think your recently completed catfish research in the Wabash and Ohio river should apply to those rivers only. There should be a daily bag limit under 28 + 35 inches. I fish the West Fork of the White river below Worthington commercially and for sport and the majority of catfish we catch is over the 28 + 35 inches category and sport fishing flat head is majority over 35 inches in my area. I think you need a daily bag limit on under 28 + 35 in all area but increase the over 28 + 35 daily bag limit in our area. Obviously your research would be different if done ~~in~~ in our area. Those 28 + 35 inch fish and bigger need food. If there is no smaller fish where will they get it!?

Your new rules are going to put a damper on our fishing and most of the people that I fish with feel the same way that I fish in our area.

I think your new rules SUCK.

over →

Please contact me for a further
discussion on this subject

Leroy Koontz

TX 812-825-0576

4080 N Wilkie School Rd

Bloomfield IN 47424

STHOLE LY

hvg B-104

mthf Ballater
 5076 North 81st St
 22 MAR 2011 PM 11
 vinnone Hearing Room 100 North 5th Ave.
 1ND4759 Room N 501 North 1st St
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 46204

(The following information was obtained from the above-mentioned sources.)

79

I totally agree with the possession and size limits proposed. It will help protect the large catfish.

Dennis Bargar, Dugger, IN

Why do you have to mess with the rules on catfish? It's stupid to change these rules. Most often times a big cat will swallow the hook, if you impose this size limit, you'll just see a lot of big cats floating down river because their guts were pulled out and they were thrown away in order for a fisherman to stay legal, and what about people who run nets. If you want to do something about the fish in our rivers, come up with a way to get rid of all these Asian carp!

Jeffery Brent Patterson, Marion, IN

I agree with the proposed changes to this statute.

Ryan McDuffee, Springville, IN

Great rule change!

Jameson Hibbs, Parke, IN, Parke County Parks and Recreation

The minimum length for catfish should change from 10 inches to 15 inches on ALL public bodies of water including but not limited to lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers!

Thomas C Roach, Greene County- Bloomfield, IN

I think for the most part this is a good change. However I would stress that more study be made on placing a bag limit on rivers and streams. The one Flathead/Blue over 35" rule is LONG OVERDUE....THANKYOU!!

Travis Metheny, Vigo County, IN

A size and or possession limit is definitely needed on ALL SPECIES of catfish in Indiana's rivers and streams. There are way to many people that keep every fish and release nothing at all. I personally have seen the affects on the stretch of river I fish. Limb liners, trot liners, and netters are the most notorious for doing so. Though I am 100% fine with all of those methods being legal, and will enjoy them myself from time to time, it is fact that they can have a serious affect on a catfish population in a short period of time. I think that regulating size, and possession limit will be a huge step in conserving that particular resource.

Tracey Ann Holloman, Culver, IN

Should remain the same no changes.

Matt Burlingame, North Manchester, IN

I greatly appreciate the effort the DNR has made to add the proposed changes to the catfish regulations. Both the one fish over 28 inches (CCF) or 35 inches (FHC & BCF) and the increased minimum length limit to 15 inches are tremendous steps in the right direction for protecting these fabulous resources!

Year after year catfish as a group rank among the top five fish Indiana's anglers prefer to catch and actually fish for most often. In the 2005 statewide Indiana licensed angler survey channel catfish ranked as the 6th most preferred species to catch. Anglers also indicated that blue catfish and flathead catfish were their 12th & 14th most preferred species to catch -- both ranking higher than the muskie. As a group, preference for catfish ranked 4th. Channel catfish were the 5th most sought after species trailing only bluegill, largemouth bass, crappie, and smallmouth

bass. Likewise, more Indiana anglers fished for blue catfish and flathead catfish than striped bass, northern pike, and the highly touted (and managed) muskie. The DNR's own data shows these species are highly prized sport fish in our state and, consequently, worth protecting.

I hope in the near future we will see proposals for bag limits on catfish taken from rivers too. I think during some times of the year flathead catfish (in particular) can be extremely vulnerable to angling and if one wanted to he could easily over exploit a fishery in our smaller rivers. I would be interested to know why more restrictive bag limits were not considered for this proposal.

In closing, I would like to thank the Fisheries Section for initially proposing the changes to the catfish regulations. I also thank the NRC for the opportunity to comment on these changes. I whole-heartedly support the proposal and encourage the NRC to adopt these changes immediately.

Robert John Starzynski, Jasper, IN

I fish for catfish in many of the rivers in Indiana, I prefer to keep and eat the smaller catfish that have less toxins built up in them. I feel that the minimum size limit should remain the same or at least only increase to 12 inches.

David Mundy, Crawford, IN

I believe the proposed limit of one channel catfish of 28" or over is ridiculous. I would suggest raising it to at least 30". Or, changing the limit to at least 2 or 3 fish of 28" or over.

Scott Wiseman, Indianapolis, IN

I would like to commend you on some great regulations. These catfish proposals are way overdue. Me and my family LOVE to catch trophy catfish, but we only catch and photograph...never keep. now with these regulations, it will insure that my kids and grandson will be able to do the same. Thank you DNR.

Tim Pickering, Allen County, IN,

I think you're missing the boat on the catfish regulations. if you limit the taking of catfish to only large fish, you are mandating anyone that wants to eat cats, eat cats that they shouldn't be eating. Large cats are full of toxins in our rivers and shouldn't be fed to our families! I would suggest a slot limit like 12-26" on flatheads and blues. 12"-20" on channels catfish. that would allow the general public to still use the resource safely yet limit the exploitation of trophy size catfish, by pay pond stockers. it would also protect the families of fishermen, uneducated on toxicity levels of our fish.

Paul L. Pierce, Randolph, IN

I agree with the proposed rule amendments and recommend that they be adopted.

David Starzynski, Wheatfield, IN

I think that the minimum size limit should be left at the original 10inches for channel catfish in all rivers and streams. The channel catfish fishery of Indiana is not a trophy fishery it is a food fishery and will probably never become one for trophies. In many rivers and streams it can be difficult to catch channels over 15inches and as we have been warned about by the Indiana Consumption Advisory, the larger the fish the more contaminants it may contain so it seems to

be a bad idea to increase the size limit, forcing people to eat more contaminated fish. I think a larger size limit for flathead and blue catfish is good, and may lead to more large cat fishing the populations.

William White, Tipton, IN

The size limit on catfish in rivers is long overdue.

Mike Clabaugh, Andrews, IN

I'm strongly opposed to increasing the size limit on catfish in rivers other than the Ohio. Catfish are considered rough fish in most places and not highly sought after. To me it's a change that doesn't need made.

Kristofer Mundy, United States Catfish Assoc., Monroe, IN

I run a lot of limb lines and when we catch catfish usually the hook has gone through the eye blinding them. If we go to the rule we will have to release these catfish and there will be no guaranty that they will survive. These limb lines are a very good way for people with little money to feed their families. This past spring in five days we caught 10 channel cats over 28" long. If we had not cleaned them, the chance of them surviving would not have been very good because of the stress of being on a line for hours and because they are permanently blind in one eye.

Bret W Mundy, Birdseye, IN

I think that the limit should be at least 30" or longer or raise the number of fish to 3 if over 28".

David Everage, Pekin, IN

I think the proposed amendments on catfish is a good step in the right direction. It would help protect and conserve our trophy resource and still allow legal harvest of smaller fish. Amen to that!

Honathan Land, Pike, IN, Indiana Catfish Association

Changing the size limit on catfish is a fantastic idea. I have seen the results of this in Tennessee and support it fully.

Lance Alan Pearman, Parke,

The portion of this rule limiting the number of large fish to one is great please pass it as I believe it will improve the fishery.

William Eugene Townsley, Knox County, IN

I think that most of the rules changes in this area should be for commercial fisherman. Why should sport fisherman be punished for the abundant taking of catfish by commercial fisherman? Limit the amount of fish that can be taken by commercial fisherman, not the sport fisherman.

Bret Daniel Schreckenghaust, Russiaville, IN

THIS IS CRAZY. BEFORE ANYTHING LIKE THIS WAS PUT TOGETHER FOR PROPOSAL YOU SHOULD HAVE TALKED TO THE FISHERMAN. HE WOULD HAVE LET YOU KNOW THAT YOU VERY SELDOM CATCH THE SIZE FISH THAT YOU

WANT TO PUT THE SIZELIMITS ON. MOST FISHERMAN EAT THE SMALLER CATFISH BECAUSE THEY TASTEBETTER THAN THE LARGER FISH. BUT IT IS ALSO A TREAT IF YOU HOOK INTO ALARGE FISH AFTER ALL THAT'S PART OF THE FUN OF FISHING TO CATCH A BIGONE. I THINK THINGS SHOULD BE LEFT ALONE THERES NOTHING WRONG WITH THESYSTEM NOW.

EXHIBIT C

DNR RESPONSE

Background

The issue of additional protection for catfish emerged through the Natural Resources Commission's (NRC) Comprehensive Rule Review Project that began in 2009. Numerous citizens proposed more regulatory protection, often citing concerns about commercial overharvest of big catfish for sale to pay lake operators. The DNR Advisory Council identified this issue as substantive and moved it to the NRC. The NRC in turn requested DNR to provide comments or recommendations. The DNR's Division of Fish and Wildlife had some concerns about the existing catfish regulations, based on several factors believed to be placing increased pressure on Indiana's catfish resources:

- Increasing sport fishing interest in catfish, both for consumptive harvest and for a growing number of catfish catch-and-release tournaments;
- Increased commercial harvest above the long-term annual average, including the targeting of the largest catfish available for live sale to pay lakes;
- First-hand observations and anecdotal information from fishermen over a period of years that suggests the number and size of catfish appears to be declining, at least in some heavily-fished locations;
- Unquantified but expected negative impacts on catfish from growing abundance of Asian carp as well as impacts of other exotic invasive species such as zebra mussels;
- Periodic water quality issues, most notably from non-point source pollution affecting Indiana's rivers;
- Knowledge that the current 10 inch minimum size limit does not protect catfish to reproductive size which is closer to 15 inches.
- Research findings that document catfish are more heavily exploited in the commercially-fished zones of the Wabash River.

The Proposed Rule

In response, the Division of Fish and Wildlife proposed rule changes that would:

1. Increase the existing 10 inch minimum size limit to 15 inches to allow catfish to spawn at least once before being subject to harvest (for both sport and commercial fishing); and
2. Allow continued and unlimited harvest of catfish over 15 inches but impose a limit of just one large catfish of each species, defined as one channel catfish per day over 28 inches, one flathead catfish over 35 inches and one blue catfish over 35 inches.

Summary

Not unexpectedly, public comment on this proposal was mixed, reflecting the contrast between sport fishing and commercial fishing perspectives. Comments included both opposition and support for the rule changes, or portions of them. At present, there is no biological evidence that catfish populations are on the brink of collapse although overfishing may be starting to limit availability of larger catfish and overall fishing quality in some river stretches. Several citizens commented that from personal observations, they believe catfish are decreasing in abundance in the areas they fish. Others believe that catfish are increasing or unchanged. In particular, blue catfish were thought to be increasing generally. These public comments are important and make a good point that catfish resources and status vary around the state. The proposed rules are in fact, proactive in terms of offering additional protections if and when there is widespread overharvest. We therefore suggest that the proposed catfish rules are premature and as such, additional effort is warranted to more specifically identify catfish protection needs around the state.

Division of Fish and Wildlife Recommendation

It is recommended that the NRC not grant final adoption or modification to the catfish rule package at this time. Instead, the Division of Fish and Wildlife should continue efforts in the following areas:

1. Engage Illinois on interstate Wabash joint management and regulation.
2. Continue dialogue with Illinois and Kentucky on management of the lower Ohio River where the three states all permit commercial fishing as well as sport fishing.
3. Determine additional science (data) needs and design means of obtaining the information.
4. Determine additional public input needs and design means of obtaining the information.

EXHIBIT D

TITLE 312 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

LSA Document #10-657

DIGEST

Amends 312 IAC 9-7-3 by changing the size of catfish that can be taken in a river or stream other than the Ohio River. Amends 312 IAC 9-7-16 by establishing size and bag limits for catfish taken from the Ohio River. Amends 312 IAC 9-8-2 and 312 IAC 9-8-6, governing commercial fishing on the Ohio River and all inland waters, by establishing size and bag limits for catfish. Effective 30 days after filing with the Publisher.

312 IAC 9-7-3 Catfish

Authority: IC 14-10-2-4; IC 14-22-2-6

Affected: IC 14-22

Sec. 3. (a) **This subsection applies only to a river or stream other than the Ohio River and all of its bays and tributaries.** An individual must not take or possess a channel catfish, blue catfish, or flathead catfish from a river or stream unless the catfish is at least ~~ten (10)~~ **fifteen (15)** inches long. An individual may take or possess an unlimited number of channel catfish, blue catfish, or flathead catfish from a river or stream.

(b) Except as otherwise provided in ~~subsection~~ **subsections (c) and (d)**, an individual may take or possess not more than ten (10) catfish in aggregate of any size from a lake or reservoir per day.

(c) Notwithstanding subsection (b), an individual may take channel catfish from Gibson Lake (Gibson County) and Turtle Creek Reservoir (Sullivan County) without regard to a bag limit.

(d) **Notwithstanding subsections (a) through (c), an individual may take not more than one (1) each of a:**

(1) channel catfish twenty-eight (28) inches in length or longer;

(2) blue catfish thirty-five (35) inches in length or longer; and

(3) flathead catfish thirty-five (35) inches in length or longer;

from a river, stream, lake, or reservoir per day.

(Natural Resources Commission; 312 IAC 9-7-3; filed May 12, 1997, 10:00 a.m.: 20 IR 2718; filed May 28, 1998, 5:14 p.m.: 21 IR 3721; filed Dec 26, 2001, 2:40 p.m.: 25 IR 1539; readopted filed Jul 28, 2003, 12:00 p.m.: 27 IR 286; readopted filed Nov 24, 2008, 11:08 a.m.: 20081210-IR-312080672RFA; filed Jul 6, 2010, 1:55 p.m.: 20100804-IR-312090616FRA)

312 IAC 9-7-16 Sport fishing on the Ohio River

Authority: IC 14-10-2-4; IC 14-22-2-6

Affected: IC 14-22

Sec. 16. (a) This section governs fishing on the Ohio River, excluding all bays and tributaries.

(b) An individual must not take sport fish except by any of the following:

- (1) Fishing pole or hand line.
- (2) Float fishing.
- (3) Setlines:
 - (A) attached to:
 - (i) a tree limb;
 - (ii) a tree trunk;
 - (iii) a bank pole; or
 - (iv) the bank itself; and
 - (B) each bearing one (1) single or multibarbed hook.
- (4) Not more than two (2) trotlines per individual. Each trotline shall have not more than fifty (50) single or multibarbed baited hooks placed not closer together than eighteen (18) inches. All trotlines must be tended at least once every twenty-four (24) hours.

(c) An individual may take an exempted species of fish as defined in 312 IAC 9-6-10, by the methods prescribed in subsection (b) or according to the following methods:

- (1) Long bow, including compound bow, with an arrow having one (1) or more barbs and a line attached. An exempted species of fish without scales shall not be taken with bow and arrow during nighttime hours (from one-half (1/2) hour after sunset until one-half (1/2) hour before sunrise).
- (2) Gigging from February 1 through May 10 with any pronged or barbed instrument attached to the end of a rigid object. A person must not take fish by gigging from a boat or platform.

(d) An individual must not take fish within two hundred (200) yards below any dam on the Ohio River except by fishing pole or hand line.

(e) An individual must not take minnows from the Ohio River except by:

- (1) a minnow trap not to exceed three (3) feet long and eighteen (18) inches in diameter nor having a throat opening greater than one (1) inch in diameter;
- (2) a dip net not to exceed three (3) feet in diameter;
- (3) a minnow seine not to exceed thirty (30) feet long and six (6) feet deep nor having mesh size larger than one-fourth (1/4) inch bar mesh;
- (4) a cast net; or
- (5) lawful fishing methods provided in this section.

(f) An individual may take fish in the Ohio River only by sport fishing methods authorized under this section as follows:

	Daily Bag	Possession Limit	Size (Inches)
Bass (largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted)	6	12	12 (except no size limit on spotted bass)
Bass (white, yellow, striped, and	30	60	Not more than 4 fish can be 15

hybrids)			or longer
Rock bass	15	30	none
Walleye, sauger, and saugeye	10	20	none
Muskellunge and tiger muskellunge	2	2	30
Crappie	30	60	none
Catfish (blue)	unlimited	unlimited	less than 35
	1	2	35
Catfish (flathead)	unlimited	unlimited	less than 35
	1	2	35
Catfish (channel)	unlimited	unlimited	less than 28
	1	2	28

(Natural Resources Commission; 312 IAC 9-7-16; filed May 12, 1997, 10:00 a.m.: 20 IR 2720; errata filed Nov 24, 1997, 4:30 p.m.: 21 IR 1347; readopted filed Jul 28, 2003, 12:00 p.m.: 27 IR 286; readopted filed Nov 24, 2008, 11:08 a.m.: 20081210-IR-312080672RFA; filed Aug 28, 2009, 3:39 p.m.: 20090923-IR-312080886FRA; filed Jul 6, 2010, 1:55 p.m.: 20100804-IR-312090616FRA)

312 IAC 9-8-2 Commercial fishing except on the Ohio River; general provisions

Authority: IC 14-10-2-4; IC 14-22-2-6; IC 14-22-13

Affected: IC 14-22-13-4; IC 14-22-14-23

Sec. 2. (a) This section applies to license holders engaged in commercial fishing on:

- (1) waters of the state;
- (2) boundary waters; or
- (3) waters containing state-owned fish;
other than the Ohio River.

(b) For purposes of this section, "license holder" means an individual licensed under IC 14-22-13 to use in, and to possess for use in, the water seines, nets, or other commercial fishing gear authorized in this rule. The term includes an individual commercially fishing while accompanied by the licensee as specified at IC 14-22-13-4.

(c) A license holder may take or sell fish with a commercial fishing license issued under this rule and 312 IAC 9-6-11. A license holder may take fish with the aid of illumination of:

- (1) a spotlight;
- (2) a searchlight; or
- (3) an artificial light;
where lawfully engaged in commercial fishing.

(d) A license holder subject to this rule must not possess trout or salmon.

(e) A license holder must not possess or sell any of the following taken from the waters described in subsection (a):

- (1) Chubs.
- (2) Northern pike.
- (3) Chain pickerel.
- (4) Muskellunge.
- (5) Tiger muskellunge.
- (6) White bass.
- (7) Yellow bass.
- (8) Striped bass.
- (9) Hybrid striped bass.
- (10) Walleye.
- (11) Sauger.
- (12) Saugeye.
- (13) Smallmouth bass.
- (14) Largemouth bass.
- (15) Spotted bass.
- (16) Bluegill.
- (17) Redear sunfish.
- (18) Rock bass.
- (19) Crappie.
- (20) American eel.
- (21) Paddlefish.
- (22) Lake sturgeon.
- (23) Lake herring.
- (24) Blue catfish less than ~~ten (10)~~ **fifteen (15)** inches long.
- (25) Channel catfish less than ~~ten (10)~~ **fifteen (15)** inches long.
- (26) Flathead catfish less than ~~ten (10)~~ **fifteen (15)** inches long.
- (27) Lake whitefish less than eighteen (18) inches long.
- (28) Yellow perch.

(f) A license holder may take and sell shovelnose sturgeon that are at least twenty-five (25) inches in fork length only from October 1 through May 31.

(g) A license holder may take only one (1) each of the following per day:

- (1) Channel catfish twenty-eight (28) inches in length or longer.**
- (2) Blue catfish thirty-five (35) inches in length or longer.**
- (3) Flathead catfish thirty-five (35) inches in length or longer.**

~~(g)~~ **(h)** A license holder who possesses or sells a fish described in this section must comply with 312 IAC 9-6-11.

~~(h)~~ **(i)** A license holder must report fish catches as follows:

- (1) A license holder under this section shall keep accurate daily records on a departmental form of the following:
 - (A) The pounds and species of fish caught.
 - (B) The number of pieces of each type of gear fished by date.
 - (C) The county fished.

The license holder shall submit the completed form to the division by the fifteenth day of each month for the preceding month whether the license holder fished or not. The license holder shall allow onboard and dockside inspections of the gear and catch at any time by the director or the director's representative.

(2) A license holder for Lake Michigan must comply with the reporting requirements of IC 14-22-14-23 and section 3(h) of this rule.

(Natural Resources Commission; 312 IAC 9-8-2; filed May 12, 1997, 10:00 a.m.: 20 IR 2721; filed May 28, 1998, 5:14 p.m.: 21 IR 3724; readopted filed Jul 28, 2003, 12:00 p.m.: 27 IR 286; filed Feb 27, 2007, 2:25 p.m.: 20070328-IR-312060262FRA; readopted filed Nov 24, 2008, 11:08 a.m.: 20081210-IR-312080672RFA; filed Jul 6, 2010, 1:55 p.m.: 20100804-IR-312090616FRA)

312 IAC 9-8-6 Commercial fishing on the Ohio River

Authority: IC 14-10-2-4; IC 14-22-2-6; IC 14-22-13

Affected: IC 14-22-13-4

Sec. 6. (a) This section applies to license holders engaged in commercial fishing on the Ohio River as authorized under IC 14-22-13.

(b) "License holder" means an individual licensed under IC 14-22-13 to use in, and to possess for use in, the water:

- (1) seines;
- (2) nets; or
- (3) other commercial fishing gear.

The term includes an individual commercially fishing while accompanied by the licensee as specified at IC 14-22-13-4.

(c) A license holder shall not take or sell fish except in accordance with IC 14-22-13, this section, and 312 IAC 9-10. A license holder may take fish with the aid of illumination of:

- (1) a spotlight;
- (2) a searchlight; or
- (3) an artificial light;

where lawfully engaged in commercial fishing.

(d) A license holder under this section ~~may take and~~ **must not possess or sell all species of fish any of the following taken** from the Ohio River: ~~except the following:~~

- (1) Largemouth bass.
- (2) Smallmouth bass.
- (3) Spotted bass.
- (4) Rock bass.
- (5) White crappie.
- (6) Black crappie.
- (7) Walleye.
- (8) Sauger.
- (9) Saugeye.

- (10) Striped bass.
- (11) White bass.
- (12) Hybrid striped bass.
- (13) Yellow bass.
- (14) Muskellunge.
- (15) Northern pike.
- (16) Tiger muskellunge.
- (17) Chain pickerel.
- (18) Lake sturgeon.
- (19) Trout.
- (20) Salmon.

(e) A license holder may take and sell shovelnose sturgeon that are at least twenty-five (25) inches in fork length only from October 1 through May 31.

(f) A license holder may take and sell paddlefish that are at least thirty-two (32) inches in eye to fork length only from November 1 through April 30. The cutting or mutilation of live paddlefish to check for eggs is prohibited except that a 10-gauge needle may be inserted into the abdomen between the pectoral and pelvic fins to determine the presence of eggs.

(g) A license holder may take only one (1) each of the following per day:

- (1) Channel catfish twenty-eight (28) inches in length or longer.**
- (2) Blue catfish thirty-five (35) inches in length or longer.**
- (3) Flathead catfish thirty-five (35) inches in length or longer.**

~~(g)~~ **(h)** A license holder under this section must tag each item of gear so that a conservation officer may determine if the:

- (1) gear is properly licensed; and
- (2) license holder is complying with the law.

~~(h)~~ **(i)** No person shall possess a seine, net, or commercial trotline except as authorized with a valid commercial fishing license for the Ohio River. This subsection does not apply to a manufacturer, retailer, or wholesale dealer who possesses gear exclusively for sale.

~~(i)~~ **(j)** Commercial fishing nets authorized under this section cannot be used on a bay or inlet of the Ohio River. A line drawn from point to point of a bay or inlet denotes the limits of the fishing zone. Commercial gear cannot be used within fifty (50) yards of the mouth of a stream. Commercial gear, except slat traps, cannot be used in the following locations:

- (1) John T. Myers Dam downstream to the outer lock wall and the portion of the split channel around the southern part of Wabash Island from the fixed weir dam to the first dike.
- (2) Newburgh Dam downstream to the end of the outer lock wall.
- (3) Cannelton Dam downstream to the end of the outer lock wall.
- (4) McAlpine Dam downstream to the K and I railroad bridge.
- (5) Markland Dam downstream to the end of the outer lock wall.

(j) (k) Each item of fishing gear in use must be tended not less frequently than once every twenty-four (24) hours and all fish taken by the gear removed, except that baited hoop nets or slat traps may be left unattended for not more than seventy-two (72) hours. Each item of gear must be removed from the waters in which the item was fished immediately upon usage.

(k) (l) Gear is authorized only as set forth as follows:

(1) Lines and mesh must be made of:

- (A) linen;
- (B) cotton; or
- (C) a flexible synthetic fiber.

(2) The following restrictions apply to a hoop net, wing net, straight lead net, or heart lead net:

- (A) Each net described in this subdivision must have a minimum bar mesh size of one (1) inch.
- (B) Hoops may be any size, shape, or material.
- (C) The maximum length of the lead or wing is sixty (60) feet.
- (D) One (1) tag must be attached to the front hoop of each net.

(3) The following restrictions apply to a gill or trammel net:

- (A) The minimum bar mesh size that can be fished from November 1 through April 30 is four (4) inches.
- (B) The only bar mesh size that can be fished from May 1 through October 31 is from four (4) inches to four and one-half (4 1/2) inches.
- (C) The nets referenced in this subdivision may be fished weighted or as a flag net.
- (D) A tag must be attached to the net at intervals not less than one hundred (100) feet apart.

(4) The following restrictions apply to a commercial trotline:

- (A) Each line must have more than fifty (50) hooks placed not closer than eighteen (18) inches apart.
- (B) One (1) tag must be attached.
- (C) The trotline must be:

- (i) not longer than three thousand (3,000) feet, including staging; and
- (ii) fished separately rather than tied in a continuous line.

(5) The following restrictions apply to a seine:

(A) A seine must have the following:

- (i) A minimum bar mesh size of one (1) inch.
- (ii) Both float and lead lines.
- (iii) Wood, fiberglass, metal poles, or brails attached to each end.

(B) A seine in the water must be attended by individuals pulling the seine through the water for the entrapment of fish.

(C) A seine must have a tag attached at intervals not less than one hundred (100) feet apart.

(6) The following restrictions apply to a slat trap basket:

(A) No wire or other mesh may be added to the trap.

(B) At least two (2) openings not less than one and one-fourth (1 1/4) inches wide must be located between the slats. These openings shall not be restricted by cross-bracings shorter than eight (8) inches long.

(C) The trap shall be not larger than two (2) feet in diameter or square end measure.

(D) A tag must be attached to the open ring or square.

(l) (m) A license holder must do the following:

(1) Keep accurate daily catch records on a departmental form of the following:

(A) The pounds and species of fish caught by gear type.

(B) The number of paddlefish and shovelnose sturgeon caught by gear type.

(C) The pounds of paddlefish, shovelnose sturgeon, sucker, and eggs sold.

(D) The location fished by pool, river mile, and county.

(2) Submit to the department the completed form required under subdivision (1) by the fifteenth day of each month for the preceding month whether the license holder fished or not.

(3) Allow on-board and dockside inspection of the gear and catch at any time by the director or the director's representative.

(Natural Resources Commission; 312 IAC 9-8-6; filed May 12, 1997, 10:00 a.m.: 20 IR 2725; filed May 28, 1998, 5:14 p.m.: 21 IR 3727; readopted filed Jul 28, 2003, 12:00 p.m.: 27 IR 286; filed Feb 27, 2007, 2:25 p.m.: 20070328-IR-312060262FRA; readopted filed Nov 24, 2008, 11:08 a.m.: 20081210-IR-312080672RFA; filed Aug 28, 2009, 3:39 p.m.: 20090923-IR-312080886FRA)